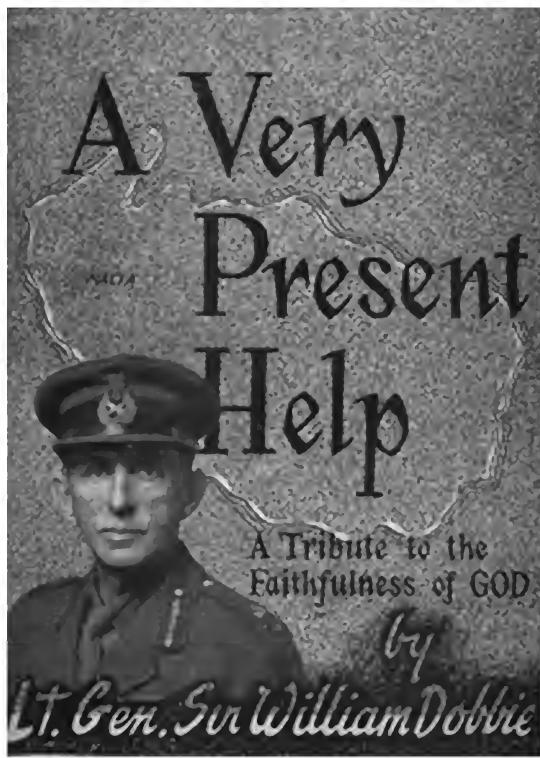


# A Very Present Help:

## A Tribute to the Faithfulness of God



© 1945 Sir William Dobbie, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., D.S.O.

## From the flap of the Book Jacket

Lt.-Gen. Sir William Dobbie was born in Madras, India, in 1879...

Was educated at Charterhouse School, London, and the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich ...

Married Sybil Orde-Browne in 1904...

Served in both World Wars and in Ireland, Egypt and Palestine ...

Was made Knight Commander of the Bath in 1941, and Knight Grand Cross of St. Michael and St. George in 1942 ...

Was awarded the Distinguished Service Order, the Legion of Honor (France), and the Order of Leopold (Belgium) and the French and Belgian Croix de Guerre ...

Retired from active military duty in 1942 ...

Consistently proclaimed his great message to the world — a message declaring the faithfulness of God and urging Christians and unbelievers to find in Him their "very present help."

In 1929.... Dobbie was stationed in Palestine and had an office overlooking (Gordon's) Golgotha. In 1929 the Bible Society distributed New Testaments to the British soldiers serving there. Dobbie wrote the following note which was inserted into each copy for his troops:

You are stationed at the place where the central event in human history occurred — namely the crucifixion of the Son of God. You may see the place where this happened and you may read the details in this book. As you do this, you cannot help being interested, but your interest will change into something far deeper when you realise the events concern you personally. It was for your sake the Son of God died on the cross here. The realisation of this fact cannot but produce a radical change in one's life — and the study of this book will, under God's guidance, help you to such a realisation. W.G.S. Dobbie (Brigadier) 10 October 1929.

## From the Jacket of the Book

General Dobbie and "the miracle of Malta" — a great man and a great event which cannot be separated. General Dobbie was the heroic governor of the famous island of Malta when, in 1940, it was bitterly besieged by fierce enemies who sought to seize it. But Malta, "the most bombed spot on earth," did not fall; God — the miracle-working God — "a very present help" — delivered the enemy-battered island.

The world-renowned General believes in the power of prayer. Speaking of the Malta miracle, he says with conviction, "God was with us. I know He was, definitely and practically, in our difficult times. It is marvelous in our eyes."

This book is the voice of the General's heart. Humbly, thankfully, he pays tribute to the faithfulness of God. Let this valiant hero's message speak to your heart; it will give you courage, peace, and power.

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## FOREWORD

DURING the course of a long, varied and interesting military career I have had many tokens of God's great goodness to me. I have experienced His help in all sorts of circumstances. I have seen His overruling control in my life, and His guidance in my affairs. I have been amazed at His faithfulness to me, in spite of much unfaithfulness on my part toward Him. I have been specially impressed by His forbearance, and patience with me, and by the way He has loaded me with benefits which I have but ill deserved. I therefore desire to acknowledge my debt to Him, and in this imperfect way to express my gratitude. That is one reason why I have written this book. In all these experiences I have learned lessons which have stood me in good stead. It is possible that these lessons may be of help to others, perhaps to my brother officers in the fighting services. This is the other reason why I have written this book. I desire to share with these others those things which have been of such help to me. I desire to emphasize, especially to the rising generation, that it is a practical and intensely real thing to let Christ come into one's life, and that today, as ever before, it is no vain thing to trust in the living God.

W.G.S. DOBBIE

London

September, 1944.

# Chapter 1

## The Crisis of 1940

THE summer of 1940 was a time of crisis for the British Empire, and indeed for the whole world. Disaster had come to our expeditionary force in France, and although most of the personnel were saved, we lost nearly all our equipment, and our Army ceased to exist (for the time being) as an effective instrument of war. The French nation, our ally at that time, was brought to its knees, and forced out of the war. The British Empire then stood entirely alone, and faced the victorious might of Germany and her satellites. The heart of the Empire, Great Britain, was exposed to a full-scale attack by sea and air from the nearby bases in France and Belgium, recently acquired by the Germans, and the forces available for the defence of the country were ludicrously inadequate. It was at this time that Italy, the chief satellite of Germany, and up till then theoretically neutral, or at any rate nonbelligerent, decided to throw in her lot unreservedly with Germany, and declared war against us.

This decision immediately put an entirely new complexion on the strategical situation, especially in the Mediterranean. Bad as the situation was before, it now became infinitely worse, since our vital life line to Egypt and the East through the Mediterranean was compromised and rendered practically useless. It was very evident that if the enemy gained and retained undisputed control of the Mediterranean, our plans and our activities would be so seriously prejudiced that the chances of winning through to survival and ultimate victory would be very remote. It was evident, also, that Malta, lying as it does in the very centre of the Mediterranean, and flanking the Italian life line between Italy and North Africa, was not only of the greatest importance, but was, in fact, the vital key point which must be held at all costs. Its loss would obviously open the door to disasters of the first magnitude, the outcome of which was not good to contemplate.

The situation in Malta, moreover, was a replica, in miniature, of the general situation in Great Britain. The isolation, the formidable strength of the enemy's forces, the proximity of bases from which his attacks could be launched, the unbelievable paucity of our defensive resources, the great civilian population exposed to a ruthless enemy, the dependence on seaborne supplies, and the expectation of attack in overwhelming strength — all these things and many others went to make up the defence problem of Malta, as they did the similar problem in Great Britain on a vaster scale.

Such was the situation which presented itself to me a few weeks after my wife and I had landed in Malta, where I had been sent, at a moment's notice, to take up the post of Governor. We landed on the 28th April, 1940, and six weeks later Italy declared war against the British Empire. I thus found myself confronted with problems and difficulties of an unusual nature, and for which I had had no previous experience. But, through the goodness of God, I had learned to know something of His grace and power long before I reached Malta, and that knowledge stood me in good stead in the difficult circumstances in which I was placed. If I had had to face the difficulties relying only on my own wisdom and strength, I would have found these difficulties too great. But I found that God was to me a Resource and a Helper to Whom I could always turn; that He was, in fact, "a very present help in trouble." That fact made all the difference to me, and the experience I had of Him and of His help, and of the confidence He engendered during the two wonderful years in which my wife and daughter and I were privileged to serve in Malta, will never be forgotten.

For I was then dealing with One Whom I already knew, and Who by His grace was no Stranger to me. I had proved His faithfulness time and time again, and that in spite of all my unfaithfulness to Him; and this made all the difference. It was like meeting an old friend in new circumstances, a Friend Whom I had tested and proved times without number, and Who had never let me down. I knew that not only was He all-loving, but all-wise, and all-powerful as well, and was fully able to help me through my present difficulties, and to bring Malta through her trials.

As a consequence of this confidence, I thought it right, in the early days of the siege, to issue to the garrison of Malta, weak as it was, a Special Order of the Day, defining the policy governing the defence of the fortress. It ran as follows:

"The decision of His Majesty's Government to fight on until our enemies are defeated will have been heard with the greatest satisfaction by all ranks of the garrison of Malta. It may be that hard times lie ahead of us, but however hard they may be, I know that the courage and determination of all ranks will not falter, and that with God's help we will maintain the security of this fortress. I therefore call upon all officers and other ranks humbly to seek God's help, and then, in reliance upon Him, to do their duty unflinchingly."

I will describe later on in more detail the happenings of that wonderful period, full as it was of many tokens of God's gracious dealings with me at other times, and to set down some of the lessons I have learned, so that God's Name may be glorified thereby, as it becomes apparent how wonderfully good He was to one very unworthy, and that others may profit from the things He has taught me,

-l and private life, and that with Him life can be a very wonderful thing.

As I write this I look back on many mistakes and failures on my part, both of omission and commission — on the many times I have failed Him, and must have grieved and disappointed Him. And yet, through it all, I am amazed at His forbearance and kindness to me. These thoughts create a sense of shame in myself, but an intense feeling of gratitude to the One Who has stood by me in spite of all.

## Chapter 2

### The Beginning of the Way

THE summer of 1940 was a time of crisis for the British Empire, and indeed for the whole world. Disaster had come to our expeditionary force in France, and although most of the personnel were saved, we lost nearly all our equipment, and our Army ceased to exist (for the time being) as an effective instrument of war. The French nation, our ally at that time, was brought to its knees, and forced out of the war. The British Empire then stood entirely alone, and faced the victorious might of Germany and her satellites. The heart of the Empire, Great Britain, was exposed to a full-scale attack by sea and air from the nearby bases in France and Belgium, recently acquired by the Germans, and the forces available for the defence of the country were ludicrously inadequate. It was at this time that Italy, the chief satellite of Germany, and up till then theoretically neutral, or at any rate nonbelligerent, decided to throw in her lot unreservedly with Germany, and declared war against us.

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and one which made me feel miserable, and from which I greatly desired relief. I do not suppose that in the eyes of the world I was a particularly conspicuous sinner. I was, I imagine, much the same as most boys my age, but I did realize that things were not right between God and me, and that I was quite unfit to stand in His sight. Looking back on it now, I am more grateful to Him than I can say, that He put this burden on me. If He had not done so, I might never have sought for the relief which I found then, and have found ever since increasingly in Christ. This experience has helped me to understand the meaning of Christ's words when He explained that the work of the Holy Spirit was to "reprove the world of sin," and so it was. Owing to the operation of the Holy Spirit, my need of a Saviour was brought home to me. This may have been through the words of friends or relatives who were concerned about me; or it may have been due to the fact that some of my schoolfellows at this time entered into an experience of Christ as Saviour; or it may have been due to some address, or addresses, I heard; or it may have been, and probably was, due to a combination of all these factors. But on the first Sunday of November, 1893, when I was spending a half-term holiday from Charterhouse at Blackheath, I realized for the first time, although I had often heard it before, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had come to this earth for the express purpose of laying down His life as the Atonement for my sin, in order to deliver me from its penalty and power, so that I might go free.

Burdened as I was with the guilt of my sin, I realized that this remedy exactly met my need, and I then and there accepted Jesus Christ as my Saviour, on the grounds that by His death He had settled my debt once for all, and that, therefore, I went free. As time passed I entered more and more in to the meaning and implications of this wonderful transaction; but from the very beginning I rested my hopes on the plain fact that Christ had taken my place and had fully satisfied the just claims of a Holy God against me, and that I was able to make no contribution to that perfect work of His, beyond gratefully accepting it and acknowledging it.

That was the turning point in my life. It was then that the foundation was laid — and I have found that that foundation cannot be shaken by anything whatever, because it is founded upon a rock. Having taken this vital step, the implications of it gradually became clear to me. This did not happen all at once, but was a gradual process brought about progressively by various factors which were, however, all controlled by the Holy Spirit. His work is not only to convince of sin, but to lead into all Truth. The former is responsible for our entering into the Way; the latter is in evidence more and more as we walk that way, and that in spite of many failures on our part.

Having taken the great step, when I accepted Christ as Saviour, my first reaction was one of intense relief. The heavy burden was lifted for good and all (and it has never come back) and I was free. I could face the past, present and future with confidence. The past, black though it was in God's sight, was blotted out; Christ's presence and help were promised for the present; and the future was assured — "Where I am, there ye may be also." Later, there came a feeling of gratitude to the One Who had brought this about, and amazement at the price He was willing to pay in order to make this possible. This sense of gratitude was gradual and progressive, and has become deeper and greater as time has passed and I have come to know God better. It is influenced, among other things, by a realization of the unspeakable greatness and power of God, which generates a sense of amazement that such a One should have been willing to stoop so low in order to lift up to His level such a one as myself. That is a constant and increasing wonder.

## Chapter 3

### The Christian and the World

AS the sense of gratitude to God in Christ grew, so also grew my desire to show my gratitude by obeying, following, pleasing and acknowledging Him. In other words, He became not only my Saviour, but also my Lord. This gave rise to many practical considerations, as I sought to translate my resolve and desire into definite policies and actions. I was brought face to face with concrete problems which had to be solved, especially those concerning my relations with the world in which I lived, and with which my profession brought me into close contact. I have found, as I think most Christians have, that this problem of relationship with the world must be settled first in principle, and when that is done, the detailed application to particular circumstances can be readily and easily made. I have found by experience how hopelessly difficult and wearing any other method can be. The method I have advocated is, after all, the Scriptural one. God has given us in His Book the principles on which we should act. The Bible has been written for all times, and therefore deals in principles which are applicable to all times.

One of the principles laid down for the Christian is separation from the world. This does not mean withdrawal from the world as a hermit or a monk withdraws from it, since the Christian is bidden to follow his lawful avocation, and in so doing to glorify God. Christ told His disciples that though they were not of the world, they would be in it, and that Divine power would keep them therein. They were told to be His witnesses, and this naturally implies contact with those by whom the witness was required — i.e., the ungodly. It seems that the principles involved may be summed up as follows:

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

Ye shall be witnesses unto Me (Acts 1:8).

In all thy ways acknowledge Him (Proverbs 3:6).

Whatsoever ye do ... do all in the name of the Lord Jesus  
(Colossians 3:17) [meaning as His representatives]

Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

If we prayerfully ponder these Scriptures, and constantly remind ourselves of them, we will surely be able to apply them to the solution of particular problems, provided, of course, we are genuinely willing to let God guide us into His Way.

Each individual is surely responsible to God, and to God alone, for the way he interprets God's rulings. It is not possible for one Christian to lay down the law for another, or to write down a list of things which a Christian may or may not do. Such a list must always be incomplete, and cases will constantly be arising which are not covered by the list. It tends, also, to laziness, by avoiding the effort involved in ascertaining God's will, and, moreover, it robs one of the unspeakable privilege of dealing directly with God, and of the assurance that one is standing on really firm ground. There are, however, certain practical points of guidance which most Christians have found helpful in this connection.

The first is this. In the matter of separation, the earlier the necessary steps are taken, the easier and the better it is for all concerned. When an officer first joins a unit, or when he gets his commission, that is the time, par excellence, to let it be known Whose he is and Whom he serves. It is increasingly difficult to repair an omission or an error in this matter as time passes. Whatever the cost may be, the step must be taken at the beginning. The cost will be much greater later on. Moreover, a bold step at the beginning may be an untold help to others who are similarly circumstanced, and may just tip the scales for them in the right direction. It involves a definite resolve, a making up of the mind and a determination of a very definite kind. We are told that Daniel in such circumstances "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat" (Daniel 1:8), a resolve all

the more remarkable for its courage in view of Daniel's circumstances — a prisoner in a strange land. We need to take a similarly bold and definite step. Of course, the step referred to must be taken in a becomingly humble manner. Anything which could be construed as self-righteousness, superiority, or self-satisfaction must be avoided at all costs. Such things will not commend Christ.

The second practical point is this. When in doubt, give God the benefit of the doubt. We may at times be genuinely puzzled about some matter. In that case give God the benefit of any doubt there is. We will find that Almighty God will be no man's debtor.

It is also well to remember that a life of separation from the world around, in the Army or elsewhere, has definite advantages even from the worldly point of view. It forces the Christian to strike out a line of his own, and gets him out of a groove. It develops hardihood, and independence of character, which are of great value in life, and which the world acknowledges as such. Just as in the physical realm the inhabitants of countries with a severe climate develop a rugged hardihood, so, also, in the moral realm a similar phenomenon is in evidence. It develops strength of character, independence of thought, and a self-confidence of the right sort, all of which are of great value in a life in the Services, or in any other calling. As a senior officer I have always been glad to see in reports on junior officers some such words as these — "Thinks for himself"; "Knows his own mind"; "Has the courage of his opinions." These are some of the ingredients of leadership, and the Christian life lived in obedience to the will of God can and does develop such attributes, which are recognized as valuable by the world. The above is written not because these considerations are the chief motives in a life of separation, but as an encouragement to young Christians who may be finding the going difficult.

There is also another point to remember, one which affects profoundly our efforts and our determination to lead a life of separation. We need all the help we can get in order to carry out our resolve. God Himself gives us His help, and that is amply sufficient. But He sometimes gives us human help as well, and this help is very welcome.

Such help, however, can only come from those who are children of God themselves. They are the ones with whom we should seek intimacy. There may be many others whom we may call friends, and with whom we come into constant contact, but the real intimacy is only possible with those who, like us, are members of the great family of God. It is from among these that we must choose our really intimate friends and associates. The danger of doing otherwise is very great, and the results are disastrous. Consequently, God constantly warns us against this danger, and brings it before us over and over again in Scripture. He sums up His warnings in the words, "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers." A Christian ignores this injunction at his peril. We all know of lives ruined, and usefulness annulled, by disobedience to this fundamental law. It applies, of course, particularly to marriage, but also to other forms of association as well. It is one of the things in which we need, at the outset of our Christian lives, to determine that at all costs, and by God's grace, we will not offend. The danger is very real, and it is one of the chief methods which Satan uses to undermine Christian usefulness. We all, without exception, need to watch and pray that we do not enter into this temptation. Association with the people of God is a thing which we should think of as the normal thing to aim at, even though the cost from a worldly point of view may seem high.

Moses made the right choice (Hebrews 11:24-26).

## Chapter 4

### The Life

THE choice of a career is a problem of the greatest practical importance. Different people may look upon a career in different ways. To some it is simply a means of obtaining a livelihood. By others it may be regarded as a means to another end, i.e., of service to one's day and generation. Others, again, may see in it a means of serving God and of carrying out His purposes through one's own life. The point of view makes a great deal of difference, and in the case of the Christian there is no doubt that the last-named is the right one. We desire that God should choose, as then only will we be able to occupy the position He desires for us, and so fulfil His plan.

In my case, owing to the fact that my parents consistently sought God's guidance in this matter, and that I, too, had come to a personal knowledge of Christ in my boyhood, I believe that God did overrule the decision reached. Owing to my family associations I naturally and instinctively looked at the Army as a profession to be followed. For some generations most of my forebears had been officers in the Army, my father, who entered the Indian Civil Service, being nearly the only exception. They had, moreover, been known as Christians, and had endeavoured to honour Christ in their chosen profession. It was natural, therefore, that I, a boy who had recently found Christ as my Saviour, should contemplate following in their steps. But a difficulty presented itself when it was discovered that one of my eyes was not up to the Army standard. I therefore turned my mind to my father's profession, the Indian Civil Service. As I look back over the happenings in this period of my school life, I can see God's overruling, and His faithfulness. It was thought advisable, as a preparation for the difficult Indian Civil Service examination, that I should have the experience of a public examination,

and with that in view, in 1897, while still at Charterhouse, I competed for the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich. The experience was valuable, but I did not pass high enough to gain entrance. However, owing to the failure in the medical test of some above me, I was offered a place, provided I passed the medical test. I presented myself for this, more with the idea of finding out how I stood medically, and to my great surprise I passed the test. It was by this chain of circumstances, in which I can trace God's overruling control, that I entered the Army. I have never been able to doubt that in the Army I was where He put me.

There are some who differentiate between what is called "ordinary life" and "full-time service for God." I personally do not think that it is necessary to draw a distinction between the two. If we are where God has placed us, and where He wishes us to be, the life so lived is, or should be, full-time service for God. All one's life can be lived to God's glory, and not only those parts which are concerned with positive and aggressive spiritual activities. We are told: "In all thy ways acknowledge Him"; "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might"; "Whatsoever ye do ... do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus." In a word, He wants us to be His representatives or witnesses, and to glorify Him, and attract others to Him, just where He has placed us. He must have His representatives in many walks of life and in many callings. David was a king, Amos was a herdsman. Paul plied his trade as a tent maker. The Corinthian Christians were exhorted as follows: "Let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God." In our calling we can glorify God. Of course, this applies to callings which are legitimate, and not intrinsically evil. The last two words of the text quoted above — "with God," make it clear that such callings are not advocated. A calling, a profession, or a trade in which God cannot be our companion and helper, is no place for a Christian. But any honourable calling may well be a place for a Christian who desires to serve God wholeheartedly, provided always that God has placed him there.

It is God Who must choose where His servants are to serve Him, and He must equally choose the form of their activities. He may vary the place or the form in accordance with His wisdom, and in order to fit His plan. The Christian needs ever to be on the lookout to ascertain God's will, which tomorrow may be different from what it is today. He has to keep his eye on the Pillar of Cloud, and be ready to move when it moves. Such an attitude should prevent us letting our roots get too deeply fixed in things around us, especially if God has chosen us to serve Him in what may be called a "secular" calling. We must at all times remember that though we are in the world, we need not, and should not, be of it. Many have found that this is blessedly true, and all of us may do so, if we keep "looking unto Jesus," Who not only begins the good work in us, but will also, by His grace and power, complete it.

No Christian should fear to enter any calling to which God may call him because of the difficulties inherent in the position. If we are where God has placed us we can count on Him to see us through, and keep us from letting Him down. But it is only faith in Him which will win this victory. Some people, for instance, may say: "It is impossible to be a Christian in the Army." Thank God, that is not so, since most of us know many individuals, of all ranks, who have disproved it. In many cases their experiences seemed to have strengthened their faith, and developed their Christian character. They have been able in their Army life so to present Christ to their comrades that a great number of these have been won for Him. They have learned in this particular school of experience some things which all Christians need to learn, and which some of us are so slow to learn. Since they are living under a very close scrutiny, they have to be specially careful that their life agrees with their profession.

David at one time realized this when he wrote: "Lead me in Thy righteousness, because of those which observe me" (Psalm 5:8, margin). They learn, also, to walk "humbly with God," and "in wisdom toward them that are without." They find how necessary it is to avoid any appearance of seeming superiority if they are to

have influence with others. They learn, also, that a Christian can glorify God by doing his duty "with his might." A Christian should not be (and I think very seldom is) a slovenly or inefficient soldier. And so it is with all walks of life. The difficulties which God allows us to meet are used by His grace, and with His help, to enable us to become more and more like Him. In a word, we find out the wonderful value of dependence on Him, and of His Book, the Bible, to be our guide.

There are some Christians who have doubted the legitimacy of the Army (or other fighting service) as a career for a Christian. In this matter, of course, every person must be fully persuaded for himself. A Christian need not, and must not, take second-hand orders. Each one gets his orders from God Himself. No one else may be his conscience. In the period between the two wars, 1918 to 1939, a great wave of doubt swept over the country, and many Christians were frankly puzzled by the problem. "Is Christianity compatible with membership of the fighting forces?" After careful examination of the problem in the light of God's Word, as I understand it, I have come to the conclusion that it undoubtedly is. But, as I have said above, each one must be sure of his own ground. My own conclusions were embodied in a pamphlet "Christianity and Military Service," published by the Officer's Christian Union in 1936. So far as I am concerned I have seen no reason since that time to change the views I then expressed. On the contrary, they seem to me to be confirmed by the happenings since then. The statement is reproduced by courtesy of the Officer's Christian Union in the following chapter.

God does not always call us to walk in the path which one would choose oneself. We may think that we could serve Him better in some other calling. But God makes no mistake. He knows what He wants, and what is best. Some callings may seem to be more humdrum than others. We naturally would prefer those which are more spectacular. But He needs His servants in all. Some to abide by the stuff while others go down to the battle. It always seems to me that those whom God calls to serve Him as His representatives

in the Mission Field are highly honoured. They have been picked out to serve Him in the forefront of the battle, a position which many a Christian would desire, just as a keen soldier is glad if he is called up to serve in a position of exceptional danger and special honour. But, as in the case of a soldier, we must gladly serve Him wherever He has seen fit to place us — whether we are, so to speak, doing garrison duty on the lines of communication, or taking part in the victorious advance of a field army deep into enemy territory. What God looks for is faithfulness in that position in which He has placed us. The "Well done" He will give to His servants will depend on their faithfulness, and not on the seemingly spectacular nature of their service. It is a "Well done" which we all may earn. It is not confined to the few privileged and "lucky" ones.

My life has, accordingly, been spent in the Army, where I am convinced God placed me. And although I have failed Him over and over again, and to my shame missed many opportunities He gave me, yet, as I look back on the forty-three years I had on the Active List, I thank God for His faithfulness to me, and for His forbearance, and for the way He ordered my life for me, and for the many wonderful experiences I have had of His love, His companionship and His help. I can see, now, how on many occasions He has kept me from making blunders which might have wrecked my career. I can see how He has overruled other blunders and mistakes I made, and, even, in His mercy, has actually brought blessing to me through them. I can see how all along He has been shaping my life, and preparing me to fill posts to which I was afterwards appointed. He has all along known the end from the beginning, and His purposes were often far different from and infinitely better than anything I had imagined for myself. I have seen Him shutting some doors in order to open others before me. I have seen Him denying me or taking from me certain things which I thought very important, or at least desirable, in order to give me shortly afterwards something far better.

Let two instances suffice by way of illustration. In 1928 I was a Colonel on the General Staff at the War Office. I was occupying a

rather important and an intensely interesting post. In the spring of that year, after I had held the appointment for a little over two years, and before I would normally expect to relinquish it, I was suddenly moved from the War Office to another appointment, which was far less attractive to me. To say I was disappointed and troubled, is to put it mildly. I was also much perplexed thereby. But there it was — the Pillar of Cloud had moved on, and I followed it to Chester, where my new appointment was. But God had not forgotten, nor had He made any mistake. I had not been there more than two or three months when I was appointed to command the Infantry Brigade at Cairo. This involved promotion, and enabled me to qualify, later, for higher command, from which I might have been debarred had I remained at the War Office on the Staff. Moreover, the experience I gained at Chester, which brought me more closely into contact with troops than was ever possible at the War Office, stood me in very good stead when I took over my Brigade in Cairo. Further, my new appointment gave me a unique experience, and one which I valued, as a Christian, in a special way. In the summer of 1929 serious disturbances broke out in Palestine between the Arabs and the Jews. Troops were sent down from Egypt and elsewhere to restore order, and by a wonderful chain of circumstances in which I can only see God's Hand, I was selected to command all the Armed forces in Palestine from the three fighting services. Thus I was privileged to have a hand in bringing about the "peace of Jerusalem," as well as to have the very uncommon distinction of commanding a mixed force of the Navy, Army and Air Force. God certainly took away something in order to give me something which was much better.

The other instance was in 1939. I came home in August of that year, after having been commanding in Malaya for nearly four years. Owing to the new age rules which had been brought in, I was obliged to retire upon reaching England, a state which was peculiarly galling to me at the outbreak of war, since it precluded me from being appointed to an active command in the field. I offered my services to the War Office in any capacity in which I

might be of use, but for a long period nothing was offered me. Then, in the beginning of 1940, I was told of a certain appointment which might possibly be offered me. It certainly was not one which appealed to me, but I was ready to accept anything rather than continue to be unemployed. However, nothing came of this. The scheme fell through — I do not know why. Then, in April, another appointment was suggested, and I was told I was being considered for it. It again was one which did not attract me, but I would have gladly accepted it, had it been definitely offered. Thus God seemed to shut these two doors that I knew of, besides others of which I did not know, because, as I see now, He had something far better for me.

About the 18th or 19th April, 1940, I had finished lunch in my Club, and was leaving the dining-room, when I was told that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir Edmund Ironside (now Field-Marshal Lord Ironside), who was also lunching there, wanted to speak to me. I went up to his table, and he said: "Will you go to Malta?" I replied, "Certainly. In what capacity?" He said, "As Governor." That was a thing I had never dreamed of in my wildest flights of imagination — but that was what God had in mind for me. Something infinitely better than the other appointments which had failed to materialize. On the 28th April I landed in Malta with my wife — a few weeks before the siege of Malta began.

## Chapter 5

### Christianity and Military Service(1\*)

THE problem of the relationship of the Christian to the profession of arms is no new one. Neither is the answer to it a new one. The same answer holds good today as it has ever done in the past. It is not affected by the tendencies, developments, progress and circumstances of the present day, because it depends on principles laid down long ago by the Holy Spirit of God in His written Word. These principles, like His Word, do not change. In seeking for the solution of our problem we must therefore seek to find it in that Word.

It will perhaps be convenient first of all to ascertain whether there is any *prima facie* case in the Bible for or against the suggestion that it is not lawful for a Christian to be a soldier. Having decided this point, we can then go farther and examine in some detail particular passages of Scripture which bear on the subject, especially any that appear on the surface to be antagonistic to the general formula at which we shall have arrived. We will also scrutinize certain arguments and dicta in common use among us, and decide whether or not they are compatible with the teachings of Scripture. Moreover, in considering the Bible view we must naturally confine ourselves to its teaching about the soldier. But it is obvious that the same principles must apply with equal force to the members of the other fighting services.

If, then, we take a bird's eye view of the Scriptures we will probably be struck with the following three facts, all of which bear directly on the problem we are considering, and which provide a *prima facie* answer:—

(a) The first fact is a negative one. Nowhere in the whole of Scripture is there the slightest hint that the soldier's calling is in

(1\*) Reproduced by permission from a pamphlet issued by the Officers' Christian Union.

itself unlawful. This is all the more remarkable when one considers the large extent in which the soldier's calling and work are mentioned, both in the Old and New Testaments. If his calling were inherently unlawful, it is inconceivable that the Holy Spirit (Who has written the Scriptures so that they may be our Guide) should not have indicated it. How else can one understand, for instance, John the Baptist's answer to the soldiers who came to him for advice: "Do violence to no man and be content with your wages." There is no suggestion here that true repentance was incompatible with their calling. We will have occasion to refer to this passage in more detail later on in our study. For the moment we will be content with its *prima facie* meaning.

(b) Our next fact is a positive, albeit a general one. Throughout Scripture God envisages human rule as being ultimately based on force. This has been the case in all the dispensations up to and including the present one, with which we are now mainly concerned. The time is not yet when all human relationships and the state of society generally will be ruled by love without any fear, though we long for it and are looking forward to it. At present evil has to be kept down by fear and force for the sake of society as a whole, and this fact God recognizes and approves. Moreover, He commends to the respect, sympathy and the prayers of God's people those on whom the responsibility lies to exercise the force, or "bear the sword," as the Apostle Paul describes it (Romans 13:4). It is impossible to imagine how this could be, if the use of force were in itself wrong. Further, if the use of force is approved by God, surely the recognized instrument of this force which is used cannot be displeasing to Him. It would, for example, be illogical to approve of capital punishment, but at the same time assert that the work of the executioner is unlawful. This conception of God may be foreign to our ideas of Him, but it is what He has chosen to reveal about Himself through His chosen medium — the Scriptures. The language used by the Holy Spirit in this connection in the Epistles is most striking, and deserves humble and prayerful study, notably Romans 13:1-7, Titus 3:1, 1 Peter 2:13-14.(2\*)

It is all the more striking when one considers that the governments referred to in these verses were pagan and not even nominally Christian. "Love your enemies" and loyalty to an earthly government may seem contrary. But God — who is Love — has already revealed His Will in these passages, in which the Christian is exhorted to support the authorities in the use of force for the suppression of evil.

(c) Our third fact is also positive, and somewhat more particular than the last. The Christian life is constantly likened by the Holy Spirit to that of a soldier. If the latter were an unlawful calling, the Holy Spirit would in this case be departing from His otherwise universal rule in likening the Christian life to something good and useful, or, at any rate, lawful, — e.g., husbandman, athlete, good workman, vessel to honour, etc. We are, moreover, told in Revelation 19:11 that the time is coming when the Lord Jesus will "in righteousness — make war," a simile which the Holy Spirit could hardly have used if it were inherently wrong to make war.

The above considerations would seem to show that the Holy Scriptures contain no *prima facie* case for the assumption that the profession of arms is unlawful for a Christian. Rather does it appear that there is an overwhelming one for the converse.

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(2\*) Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. (Romans 13:1-7).

"Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work" (Titus 3:1).

"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme: or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well" (1 Peter 2:13-14).

Having thus considered the problem in the most general terms, and before passing on to the examination of details, it may be desirable to clear away certain misconceptions which confuse the issue and render a clear understanding of it difficult to reach. It is perhaps not unnatural, especially for those who think superficially, to imagine a close connection between the military calling and war. In considering the lawfulness of the former they are led off into a tirade against the dreadfulness of the latter, a thing which no one denies. The confusion is sometimes carried to such a length that it is stated that since war is a dreadful thing it is wrong for a Christian to be a soldier. The logic of such an argument is not very apparent. One might as well argue that since crime is a horrible thing, it is wrong for a Christian to be a policeman, and use force for its suppression. Let us remember that the maintenance of discipline by force was exemplified when our Lord drove the changers of money out of the Temple.

No: in considering our problem, i.e., the lawfulness or otherwise of the military calling for a Christian, we must avoid the danger of confusing things which differ, and of being sidetracked by specious arguments and slogans. The only safe course is to bring all such to the touchstone of Scripture. In this way alone we keep on firm ground.

It is frequently assumed and boldly stated that war is sin. That is a misstatement, since we are told that God is a "man of war," and that the Lord Jesus will one day go forth to "make war" (see Jeremiah 51:19-21). Such language of Scripture at once disposes of the fallacy that war is sin. But if war is not sin, it is without doubt the result of sin, inasmuch as if sin had never entered into the world there would never have been any war. The same, of course, applies to other things besides war — to disease, for instance — since disease (and death) is ultimately the result of the fall. In fact, it is true of all the various instruments of judgment which God uses against the human race on account of sin — of which war and disease are two examples.

Again, what is it which causes war? Many and various are the

answers to this question, and some of them do not go very deep. For instance, it is frequently asserted that modern armaments cause war, and that if nations were to disarm, there could be no fighting. We need not examine this strange claim further than to note that modern weapons are not necessary for fighting. If such weapons are not available, and if men or nations desire to fight, they will do so with whatever is available, either more primitive weapons, or in the last resort with such means as Nature has provided. There appears then, even from a common-sense point of view, to be singularly little depth in the claim that armaments or armed forces cause war. Moreover, many instances could be quoted when the strength of the armed forces has prevented war. A "strong man armed" discourages attack. One has to go far deeper than that to find the answer. Fortunately it is given to us by God in His Word, and we will do well to turn to it rather than to the shallow speculations of the human mind. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" (James 4:1). War thus comes from sin, and is the result of the unwillingness of the human race to subordinate itself to the Will of God. It will not be eradicated until mankind is freed from the "lusts that war in our members," but will continue, we are told, until the Prince of Peace takes His rightful place in the world, as thank God, He will do one day. Until then one must expect that wars will continue to be regrettable phenomena in human history. How can the world expect peace when nations refuse to turn to the Prince of Peace? How can love reach its fullest expressions when nations refuse to turn to the God of Love? A new heart is needed in the nations of the earth and must begin in the individual (Ezekiel 36:26).

Let us now consider various passages of Scripture which refer to the matter either directly or indirectly, and endeavour with the Holy Spirit's help to ascertain the meaning He intended to convey. In doing so we must remember that He never contradicts Himself, and that the principles which He lays down in one part of Scripture

are never stultified by utterances of any individual speaking under His control in other parts of Scripture.

In the "Sermon on the Mount," as recorded in Matthew 5 and 6, there are a number of passages which are frequently quoted as proving that the use of force is always wrong. For instance, in Matthew 5:39 we read the words "Resist not evil." Does this mean that society is not to protect itself against evildoers even to the extent of using force if necessary? Does it mean that nations are not to protect themselves against the unprovoked attack of other nations? Does it mean that the strong shall not, if necessary, use their strength to protect the weak? There are some that hold that it means all these things and more. But if it does mean these things, it runs counter to the principles so clearly and explicitly stated throughout Scripture, and culminating in such passages as Romans 13:1-7 (already referred to), viz., that in the present state of affairs evil is to be resisted, and that human government must in God's providence rest on its ability to resist evil by force. The use of such force does not (or need not) do away with the necessity of seeking God's help and relying on Him. Since it is in accordance with His Will that force should be used, the powers that be can surely seek His help in the using of it. Such help should always be sought if the force is to be used successfully. There is nothing incompatible with this combination any more than was Nehemiah's action when he prayed to God and set a watch (Nehemiah 4:9). The old saying, "Trust in God and keep your powder dry," has the warrant of Scripture.

No: the text under consideration (Matthew 5:39) cannot mean an abrogation of the principle enunciated by the Holy Spirit both before and after the words were spoken by our Lord. Their meaning must be sought for in another direction.

The "Sermon on the Mount," which contains much instruction for men throughout all ages, surely refers primarily and mainly to the time when the Kingdom of God will be set up on earth. It enunciates the conditions which will obtain then, and the rules and regulations which will govern the actions of its subjects. In that kingdom

the government will be in the hands of One Who is entirely righteous and all powerful. Evil will be kept in check and will to a large extent be in abeyance. In such circumstances it will not be necessary for the individual or the nation to resist evil by force. The government will be laid on One Who is mighty, Who will Himself deal with any manifestations of evil which may show themselves.

But that time is not yet, though it will surely come. Meanwhile the governments are in human hands, and they have to use human means (though with the help of God) in order to suppress evil, and to enable mankind to live in a measure of peace and security.

If further proof were needed that the "Sermon on the Mount" refers to conditions and circumstances which do not apply in their entirety now — when there is no general acknowledgment of God by the nations of the earth — it will be found by comparing some of the other dicta in the sermon with various parts of Scripture, notably the Epistles. These latter undoubtedly contain the principles governing the present Church dispensation, and so are accurate guides for life and conduct today.

For instance, let us consider the grounds for forgiveness as enunciated in Matthew 6:15: "If ye forgive not .... your Heavenly Father will not forgive you." Is that the basis on which we are now forgiven? Thank God it is not so. Under grace we are forgiven on quite different grounds, and we are exhorted to forgive "even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32), exactly the other way round. The former passage emphasizes our attitude to each other, whereas the latter emphasizes God's attitude to us, which should compel us in gratitude to forgive His other children. The latter passage is complementary to the former.

Another passage which deserves special attention contains the words spoken by our Lord when He rebuked Peter for defending Him: "For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matthew 26:52). This expression is also repeated by the Holy Spirit in Revelation 13:10. What does it mean? Does it mean (as some would seem to suppose) that all soldiers die violent deaths on the battlefield? It can hardly mean that. If it did, it would prove that

Christ's forecast has been falsified by the event. Why, then, did He reprove Peter? Surely it was because Peter was relying on carnal weapons to produce spiritual results. That is a thing of which He has never approved. In spiritual things "we do not war after the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:3-4). History is full of both positive and negative proofs of the truth of this principle. A Christian, then, may not use carnal weapons in the spiritual realm to produce spiritual results. But it does not follow that as a citizen and servant of an earthly state, in the human realm, he may not use them.

"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" is another verse that is frequently brought forward to prove that the use of force is forbidden in Scripture. In reality it proves just the reverse, since it clearly sanctions and justifies judicial execution. It faces the unpleasant fact that so long as sin is in evidence in the world drastic means will have to be taken to suppress it for the benefit of society as a whole.

Then there is the reply given by John the Baptist to the soldiers, which has already been referred to. He said to them, "Do violence to no man and be content with your wages" (Luke 3:14). Their very profession might quite lawfully require the use of violence in certain cases, even as a policeman may have to use violence. His saying cannot mean that they should only remain soldiers provided they never used violence. That would be a contradiction in terms. He surely meant that they were not to use the power conferred on them by their arms to further their private ends, and to extort money from the weak. His advice to "be content with your wages" certainly suggests this, and must have been his meaning. In some countries at the present time such advice would still be very appropriate, even though it may seem unnecessary now in our own land.

If, then, the use of force, even to the extent of taking human life, is in certain circumstances approved of God, the calling is in itself lawful for a Christian. It is unthinkable that a Christian should feel unable to undertake a lawful and necessary

(though unpleasant) duty, while he is content to leave it to non-Christians to carry it out for him.

It is noteworthy that the four (army) centurions mentioned in the New Testament are all spoken of with a greater or lesser degree of commendation. Two especially (the centurion at Capernaum and Cornelius) are held up as being God-fearing men, whose faith God honoured. There was not even a hint of a suggestion that they were exhorted as men of faith to give up their army career; rather can we assume that they were encouraged to honour God in it.

From the foregoing it will be seen that Scripture indicates that the profession of arms is an honourable and lawful one; that the use of force and material weapons is not incompatible with faith in God; that God is a God of order and that in this present dispensation He has ordained that human governments shall maintain order by force; that the time is not yet, though it will surely come, when "the government will be on His shoulder," and man will then be able to beat his sword into a ploughshare.

One word more. The above are the principles which apply to all mankind equally, irrespective of nationality. To the British soldier, however there is an additional assurance and comfort. Whatever may be the case with other nations, or may have been the case in the past history of our own, it is quite certain that the British armed forces will never be used in a selfish war of aggression. They exist only and entirely for purposes of defence and in order to maintain peace. Their role is almost entirely analogous to that of the police force in the latter's relation to crime. That the British forces are the means by which peace is maintained (occasionally restored) throughout our Empire, and whereby our peoples are enabled to live in peace and security, is abundantly evident to those who have eyes to see. Indeed, they exert a not inconsiderable influence on the maintenance of the peace of the world. To be a member of these forces is surely an honourable thing, and well fitting for a Christian should God have called him to serve Him in that sphere.

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A further note on this subject by the Editor of Practical Christianity is to be found in an Appendix.

## Chapter 6

### God — A Very Present Help

THERE is an idea prevalent in the minds of many people that "religion" is a thing apart, and has little or no connection with our everyday, workaday, life. It is a thing for Sundays, or for special occasions, when it should, perhaps, be practised, and then put aside while the real business of life goes on. I have used the word "religion" for convenience and for want of a better word. It involves, of course, the consideration and practice of spiritual things, as opposed to mundane and material things, and implies a relationship with, and attitude towards, God Himself, as the Father of spirits, and the One Who created mankind for His pleasure, and redeemed mankind at a great cost. Religion (in this sense) is not a thing apart from our daily life, but is (or should be) our life. We cannot divorce it from our life, and live in the full sense of the world. It is one of the amazing mysteries that God Almighty condescends to take a personal interest in the small details of the lives of His humblest creatures, as Christ so clearly explained by His illustration of His care for the sparrows. It is an equally amazing mystery that Christ should have so greatly desired to have us with Him, that for this "joy which was set before Him, He endured the Cross." But these things are so in very truth, however little we may understand them, and we will undoubtedly find more and more how true they are as our knowledge of God through Christ increases and deepens. When once we have become "children of God through faith in Jesus Christ," we enter into a wonderful relationship with God as our Father, in a very real sense, and He does undoubtedly take a Father's interest in all that concerns His children. It is, therefore, not only possible, but natural, that we may take every single problem of our lives, however great or however small, to God Himself, and the practice of this privilege, of which we take far too little advantage, makes all the difference in life.

Moreover, we need to realize that God places us in a particular position, and in particular circumstances, as He sees best. He chooses the way in which He wishes us to serve Him. He, therefore, is concerned in the way we live our lives, since the fulfillment of His purposes is thereby affected. In this respect, the procedure of the fighting services provides a good analogy. A unit, or an individual, is sent to a particular place, and charged with certain duties, by the higher authority of the Service concerned. These decisions form part of a bigger plan, in which the activities of the unit or individual in question dovetail into those of others, to make one harmonious whole. The superior authority, moreover, concerns itself with the well-being of its subordinates, and provides what they need in order to carry out their duties. It can, moreover, be consulted (within limits) and give advice or instruction in cases of perplexity.

So it is with the Christian in His relationship with God. He is willing to place himself unreservedly in God's hands. He is glad that God shall choose for him the path of life he treads. He is anxious to be a witness to God, and be God's representative or ambassador in that path. He knows he can count on God to see that he always had the means needed to let him carry out God's purpose, and he can always, and in all circumstances, get in touch with God, to consult Him or speak to Him, and let God speak to him. In this matter the Christian enjoys far better means of communication with God than the Service officer enjoys with his central authority. Moreover, God is always ready and glad to listen to him — a thing which is not always the case with earthly superiors!

"Religion" is certainly not a thing apart from daily life — it is life itself. Knowing this to be the case, we need to cultivate the habit of practising it, and taking full advantage of the privilege which God has so graciously accorded us. It is outstandingly true that God is willing and able to give help and wisdom in every problem, big or small, private or professional, and we will demonstrate that this is so if we make a habit of taking all our problems to Him. That should be our very first reaction as soon as the problem presents

itself. Again I repeat that God's help is available in all problems, when we are walking in the line of His will. He will help us in the choice of our career, or in any little bit of service which comes our way. He will help us in making the right plan in the face of the enemy in war — or in solving some administration problem in peace. He will help us in our relationship with others — with our superiors, who may be difficult, or with our subordinates who may need tactful handling if the best is to be got out of them. He will help us to say and do the right thing when some dilemma suddenly arises. He will keep us from saying words which afterwards we would give anything to recall. In a word, He will help us so to live that we do not dishonour Him Whom we profess to serve, and others may see that it is no vain thing, even in this twentieth century, to put our trust in the Living God.

This is the sort of relationship which God wants to enjoy. It is sad how little we enter into this privilege. We all realize, to our shame, how far we come short of these wonderful possibilities. The more we put God really first in our lives, desire to be His servants in reality, and determine that by His grace we will put away those things which interrupt our close contact with Him, the more will we experience the truth of Christ's saying — "I am with you alway." In so far as the writer has been able to enter into this experience, in spite of many failures, he can say with the utmost confidence that the help God gives in every detail of Army or of private life is so real and so practical, that he could not contemplate life without Him, and he feels that he has only touched the fringe of the possibilities.

It may be of help, here, to consider briefly the very practical subject of Divine guidance. It is one which causes most Christians much concern, and not a little perplexity. We desire to do God's Will, and are ready to do it — but the difficulty is to find out for certain what that Will is. As we read the Old Testament stories, it seems to have been so delightfully simple, in those days, that we are envious of David and Samuel and the others. We read how David enquired of the Lord, "Shall I go up?" and the Lord said,

"Go up." He then asked, "Whither?" and God said, "Unto Hebron." How simple, and how we sometimes wish we could find out God's will as easily as, apparently, David did.

But God has not left us without the means of ascertaining His will, and He graciously so orders things that the very effort we make to do so brings much blessing to our own spiritual life.

God indicates His will in a number of different ways:

- (a) By the Bible.
- (b) By circumstances.
- (c) By inward revelation.

The Bible is the most common way. In it God lays down the principles by which our lives and actions should be governed. It is astonishing to find how often these principles decide the point at issue. God never contradicts Himself, and He never leads His followers to do anything contrary to these principles revealed in the Word of God. In this way many problems can be settled. But not all. The line of action in view, about which we desire to know God's will, may not be inconsistent with any of the revealed principles. But it may not be in the line of God's will just at that time, and God may make this plain by shutting doors, and preventing us from travelling along a certain path. Paul experienced this kind of leading — shut doors and open doors. We read in the 16th chapter of Acts that Paul's company "assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not." The same Spirit had previously forbidden them to preach in Asia. God wanted Paul, at that time, to bring the Gospel to Macedonia, and so into Europe; so when Paul sailed from Troas we read he came with a straight course to Samothracia on his way to Philippi. Many Christians have experienced the same providences, God shutting doors in certain directions and opening doors in others, and so leading them into the line of His will, and the carrying out of His purposes. God sometimes indicates His will by direct revelation — putting a thought or conviction into our minds, and making us unrestful until we follow it out. We sometimes say, "The thought struck me." On occasions

that simple phrase may have a deeper meaning than we may be aware of. It may be God Himself Who has sent it. But we must also remember that God is not the only One Who implants thoughts or suggestions in our minds. Satan is constantly seeking to do the same, just as he succeeded in doing to Eve at the time of the Fall. Thoughts and impressions which we receive in this way need to be tested, so as to find out whether they are from God or from the enemy of our souls. Can such a test be applied? Thank God it can. The Bible here can usually supply the answer. We test the guidance received by the touchstone of God's Word. If it fails to pass that test, and if the "guidance" is to do something contrary to the principles revealed in Scripture, that "guidance" is not from God but from Satan. This was the test which Christ applied to the specious temptations by the devil — and we may apply it too.

But the thing which matters most is that we should be genuinely anxious to know God's will, and really ready and willing to do it, when we have found it out, God will not disappoint us. Sometimes the learning of God's will may be an unconscious process. But God will always see to it that we do not make an error, so long as we fulfil the conditions. We are constantly told in Scripture that we have need of patience in waiting on God, and waiting for God to reveal His will. Patience is a difficult lesson to learn, but a very necessary one, and especially in this matter of obtaining guidance. We sometimes feel that God does not realize the urgency of the case. He does, and far more clearly than we do. But He may be wanting to use the problem in question as a means for blessing us, by increasing our faith in Him. He may bring us right up against what appears to be an impassable barrier, before He shows us the way through, which has been there all the time. God is never late — and waiting on God is an exercise which brings great blessing into our lives. But if the time comes when we have to make a decision, and after prayerfully seeking to know God's will we still do not consciously know it, then, if we do what our judgment decides is the right course to take, that will be the will of God for us.

God never lets us down. Remember that God knows the end from the beginning. His will for us in any particular thing is part of His great purpose. It may not seem to us to be what we, with our finite minds and limited outlook, would have chosen. But we can safely trust Him to choose what is best. As we look back we can say with Samuel, "hitherto hath the Lord helped us," (1 Samuel 7:12) and as we look forward we can say with the Psalmist, "This God ... will be our Guide even unto death" (Psalm 48:14).

# Chapter 7

## Prayer

IF we are to maintain our physical life at a good level we need three main requirements. They are fresh air, food, and exercise. In the spiritual realm we find similar conditions operating if our spiritual life is to be healthy, and therefore useful. In this realm they may be represented by prayer, Bible reading, and service. We cannot afford to neglect any one of the three without disastrous results to our spiritual life. Many a Christian has caused shipwreck to his life, and has altogether failed to fulfil God's purpose for him, by the neglect of one or other of these things, and his life has, in addition, been robbed of all joy and usefulness. In this chapter we will consider the first of these three — prayer.

A great deal has been written on this subject, and a great deal of misconception exists about it. Prayer is not just asking God for something we would like to have, as too many think; still less is it a routine exercise that has to be carried out from time to time. Prayer is the means by which we get into living contact with Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, a contact through which His Spirit and His vitalizing power flow from Him to us, and by which His strength is imparted to us and our life is renewed. As we read the Gospels we cannot but be struck by the immensely important part prayer played in our Lord's life. He was constantly in touch with His Father through prayer, and devoted long periods to its exercise. Although He was God, yet He lived His earthly life in dependence on His Father, just as we may. By prayer He formed His contact with God, and from this contact there flowed to Him the strength from God which He needed day by day. A consideration of Christ's attitude towards prayer is enough to settle for all time its great importance.

As has already been pointed out, prayer is not just asking God for

something we want. It is rather asking Him for something He wants us to have, and seeking to find out what that something is. We are told that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. It is His will which matters — not ours. In other places the same truth is stated in different words — "If ye ask anything in my name, I will do it"; "Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, He will give it you." "In my name" — that is, in the name of Christ as my representative. We ask because we know it is the Lord's will that we should have it. It is the knowledge that it is His will that enables us to pray with confidence, that God will hear and answer the prayer. That is why we frequently end our prayers with "for Jesus Christ's sake." By prayer we find out His Will. God's promises about prayer, wonderful as they are, are not unconditional. It behooves us to ascertain the conditions God has laid down, and to ensure that we, on our part, carry them out. For instance, He tells us that if we regard iniquity in our heart He will not hear us (Psalm 66:18). We do well to ponder this, since it may be the explanation of much ineffective prayer. In an electric circuit a little bit of dirt may stop the flow of the electric current; so in our dealings with God, a little bit of sin may interrupt our contact with Him. If there is any known sin between us and Him, we must determinedly put it away, and seek His forgiveness for it — and we do well also to ask Him to search us and see if there is any wicked way in us, and so bring to our notice something between us and Him about which we were, perhaps, not fully aware. If we really desire to get into close touch with God through prayer, we need to examine ourselves, and, what is better still, let God examine us, and determine, by His grace, that anything which spoils our communion with Him shall be ruthlessly put away. It is easy to write this, or to say it, but only by the grace of God can it be done. Vital and uninterrupted contact with our Heavenly Father is the most wonderful thing in the world, and nothing should be allowed to interrupt it.

Another condition that God lays down is that prayer must be unselfish. He tells us that we "ask and receive not, because we ask

amiss, that we may consume it upon our lusts" (James 4:3). That sort of prayer, of course, cannot be answered.

This condition brings us back to what we were considering earlier in this chapter, when we saw that prayer must be offered in Christ's name. A selfish prayer cannot be offered in His name, and therefore it must be ineffective.

Another condition is that prayer must be offered in faith — James reminds us of this: "Let him ask in faith ... He that wavereth ... Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord" (James 1:6-7). Does this account for the ineffectiveness of some of your prayers? If God graciously gives us an answer and grants our request, are we surprised? It is to be feared that this often is so. But if we have ascertained God's will, and then asked in confidence, we must expect the answer. Here, again, we need to search ourselves.

Prayer, of course, is far more than just asking for things. It is conversing with God. It is an amazing privilege, when we come to think of it, that we are not only permitted, but encouraged, to have personal, intimate, and private conversation with our Heavenly Father, at any time, and in any place. Conversation is not, or should not be, one-sided. Prayer is not only our talking to God, but also, and more especially, God talking to us. It involves our listening to God, as well as our asking Him to listen to us. Are we really ready and anxious for Him to speak to us? We ask Him to show us His will. Do we really want to know it, and are we ready to do it? We ask Him to search us. Are we really willing to deal with what sin He puts His finger on in our lives, and let Him remove what is displeasing? We cannot lightly come into God's presence, and open our hearts before Him, unless we are genuinely anxious to accept all He shows us, and are ready completely to subordinate our will to His own.

There are, of course, certain things that we can always ask God for. He places us in a certain position — we can confidently ask Him to help us so to live as to glorify Him. We can bring the detailed problems to Him, and ask His help in solving them.

He has promised to give wisdom to those who ask Him for it, provided they ask in faith, and He expects us to turn to Him in this way. As we grow in grace, and as our experiential knowledge of Him increases, so likewise will our inclination grow to seek His help, spontaneously, and almost automatically, as soon as any problem or difficulty arises. We should get into the habit of doing this as a matter of course; it should be our first reaction to turn to Him before we turn to anyone or anything else. We need not think that only certain things can be brought to Him, or that some things are more suitable than others to speak about with Him. Whatever the problem, whether it concerns our private or professional life, whether it is big or small, whatever it is, His is the help we need, and His is the help we will get. This is a wonderful fact which many have found to be wonderfully true. The knowledge of this privilege opens up vistas before us which we have hardly dreamed of, and makes life a very wonderful experience. It is because of this that we can say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." As we contemplate this we stand in awe, amazed at the condescending love which makes such a thing possible.

It has been my privilege to experience this in some measure, and in spite of all my unworthiness to watch with wonder His intervention in response to humble prayer. The instances I quote below are some examples out of many of God's gracious dealings. I mention them for His glory and in order to encourage others, and to help us all to realize that our God is still a wonder-working God, who shows Himself strong on behalf of those who trust Him. The instances I quote refer to rather big things. They are not, however, any more remarkable for that reason than much smaller incidents in one's life. Indeed, the latter, on account of their relative insignificance, are very wonderful, since it must always seem amazing that the great God should stoop to interest Himself in the small matters of the lives of the humblest of His creatures. These latter examples of answered prayer are, however, of greater interest to the individual concerned than to others, who may not understand so clearly the special circumstances which at the time loomed so large

on the horizon. I will, therefore, confine myself to mentioning instances of God's intervention which I have seen, and which are of more general interest.

In the year 1918, the final year of the Great War, I was in the operations section of the General Staff at General H.Q. in France — on the staff of the Commander-in-Chief — Sir Douglas Haig. In March of that year the Germans made a heavy and very dangerous attack against the right of our line, and our junction with the French Armies on our right. Their object, as we knew, was to drive a wedge between the two armies, and separate them so as to defeat them in detail. The attack was very heavy, and met with a good deal of success. Our line was driven back a long way, and our connection with the French Armies was stretched almost to the breaking point. My special duties were concerned with the distribution of our forces, and to see that the necessary moves were carried out in order to meet the requirements of the changing situation. At the end of March, it became necessary, on account of the pressure of the enemy, to move a certain division from the north of our line to the south — in order to meet a serious threat of a break-through. I knew how vitally important it was that this move should take place without delay. I knew that otherwise the Germans might succeed in their prime object of separating us from the French Armies, and that, humanly speaking, would mean we lost the war. Knowing all this, I telephoned to the officer who acted as a liaison officer with the railways, and told him we needed trains at certain named stations in the north to move a specified division to certain stations in the south, and that the move was to be carried out without delay. He replied that such a move was impossible as there was no rolling stock available. I said: "But this is vital. Rolling stock must be found from somewhere or other." He again replied that it was absolutely impossible, and that no amount of argument would alter facts.

Perhaps he was right. But though arguments cannot change things, yet prayer can. I hung up the receiver and knelt down in my office at Montrenil, and laid the matter before God. I said to Him:

"Lord, I have come to the end of my tether. It seems absolutely necessary that we should carry out this move, if we are not to lose the war — please help." I got up from my knees and went on with other work. Shortly afterwards my telephone rang again, and I heard the voice of the officer to whom I had been speaking. He said: "You know that move of the Division about which you were speaking to me: well, the most extraordinary thing has happened. Sufficient rolling stock has suddenly and quite unexpectedly become available, and we can carry out the move as requested." The move was carried out. The Division arrived in the southern sector in time to plug the hole the Germans were punching in our line — and we did not lose the war!

I know that the recital of these facts raises many problems and questions. It seems to suggest that God takes sides. Suppose there were some Christian officer on the German side praying that God would enable their armies to break through? — I am aware of these difficulties, and do not know that I can answer them to the satisfaction of everyone. They are constantly arising in various forms. I can only recount the event as it happened, or as it appeared to happen in my sight. God has His own purposes in view, and orders events in such a way as to bring them about, and in His Providential purpose it was His will that the Allies should win that war. Perhaps He was reminding us that we needed His help, a fact we are so apt to forget. Perhaps He desired to strengthen the faith of one of His humble servants, and through him the faith of others. Whatever it was, I had no doubt in my mind that God intervened, and in His mercy answered prayer in a very striking and challenging way. After all, His Book is full of instances of similar phenomena which are recorded therein "for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Moreover, the idea of God taking sides is by no means unscriptural. We read of many instances where He used one nation against another in order to fulfil His purposes. The chosen people of God proved this over and over again. David in Psalm 124 spoke of God as being on their side when He delivered them from a strong enemy. We must remember, also,

that God sometimes sided against them when He had to deal with them in judgment. He sometimes has to humble us before He can lift us up, as in Deuteronomy 8:16. I have referred to this subject in a later chapter, when considering God's dealings with us in the siege of Malta, and the help He so marvelously gave us at that time.

Another instance of God's help in answer to prayer may be taken from the experiences of 1929. In the summer of that year serious disturbances broke out in Palestine between the Arabs and the Jews, and the situation rapidly became beyond the powers of the small forces of law and order to deal with it. Troops and warships were rushed from Egypt and elsewhere to restore order, and I was sent up from Egypt, where I was commanding a Brigade at the time, to take command also of other units of the three fighting services in Palestine. The additional troops, of course, arrived gradually, and on arrival were immediately disposed in what seemed the best way to meet the most pressing needs of a dangerous situation. I established my headquarters in Jerusalem. One afternoon, before all the troops had arrived, I was informed that a large force of armed Bedouin, said to be 5,000 strong, was moving on Gaza from the south-east. All my available forces were fully occupied with duties already allotted to them, and none could be spared to go to Gaza, where there was no defence force of any kind. In Gaza, besides the considerable population, was a British Mission Hospital, with British women nurses, and the wives and children of the doctors. This constituted an additional reason why the place should be protected. I knew full well the unthinkable things that would happen if the Bedouin, inflamed as they were by unscrupulous and lying propaganda, succeeded in entering Gaza. The place would become a shambles, and yet I had no means of affording it the needed protection. All I could do, I did, but that was very little. I sent down a small train, consisting of an engine and a truck with Lewis guns mounted on it, to patrol the railway line which runs to the east of Gaza, and which the Bedouin would have to cross before entering the town.

I also sent out the Royal Air Force to try and locate the Bedouin, and head them off.

The planes returned at dusk without having been able to locate them, hidden as they probably were in wadis, and the effectiveness of the "armoured" train was, of course, almost non-existent. I could think of nothing more which I could do, and as night fell I heard from various sources that the Bedouin were drawing closer and closer to Gaza. In my need I asked for God's special help and intervention, just as I had done in other desperate circumstances in France eleven years before. I knelt down and told Him that I was at the end of my resources, and implored His help. He gave it. Although for a time I kept on getting reports of the continued advance of the Bedouin in a north-westerly direction (i.e., towards Gaza), yet, suddenly, a change occurred. The Bedouin, for no reason that I was able to ascertain, changed direction at right angles, and instead of completing the short distance to Gaza, turned to the North-East, and spent the night in the open country, a long way from anything which mattered, and thus Gaza was not entered, nor molested in any way. Early the next morning H.M.S. Courageous arrived at Jaffa from Malta, with a battalion on board. A portion of it was immediately hurried by rail to Gaza, and the danger was averted. A political officer shortly afterwards got in touch with the Bedouin (they turned out to be 2,000 strong, instead of 5,000) and persuaded them that they had been misled, and they eventually withdrew. But although I tried to find a reason for that dramatic change of direction during the night, I failed to do so. I can find no explanation other than that God did, in fact, intervene, and I am grateful to Him for having done so.

Some years later I heard another side to this same story. I met Dr. Hargreaves, the missionary doctor in charge of the hospital at Gaza. At the time in question, he happened to be in Jerusalem, but his wife and family were in Gaza, as were also the nursing staff. He told me that he had heard that afternoon, in Jerusalem, the report of the advance of the Bedouin on Gaza, and was naturally greatly disturbed thereby. There was nothing he could do, since

the situation made it impossible to return to Gaza then, as he would have wished. He was under no misapprehension of the implications and the potentialities of the news he had heard. He betook himself to prayer — and while I was praying in Jerusalem, he was also doing likewise a short distance away, each of us not knowing what the other was doing. When we met some years later and compared notes, we were able to rejoice together at the faithfulness of our prayer-answering God.

These are two instances of the way God can, and does, answer the prayers of individuals. It is good to remember that He hears and acts even when the difficulty has suddenly arisen — when there has been no time for deliberate and studied intercession. He can hear the S O S of His children when they are unexpectedly confronted with a sudden and immediate danger, when they can do no more than just lift their hearts in perhaps an inarticulate appeal, and without being able to frame petitions in words. Thank God for such possibilities.

But such thoughts, while they make us glad, and engender confidence in us, also impress on us the necessity of keeping in constant and unbroken touch with God. The sudden dangers which arise, and the unexpected difficulties which so frequently confront us, make us realize how important this is. It is only as we maintain contact with Him that we have any security against these sudden perils. Our hearts are only secure from the assault of the enemy when they have their garrison within them, the indwelling Spirit of God. For this reason, as well as for many others, we need to ensure our constant contact with the living God; otherwise emergencies, when they come, will find us unprepared.

But not only does God answer the prayers of individuals; the same is true in the case of nations. In the last war this seemed very much in evidence, as, indeed, it has been in later years. As one looks back on the events of the great war, one can hardly fail to be struck with one thing. In the four years from August 1914 to July 1918, British arms had from time to time been within an ace of disaster, and yet disaster had not quite overwhelmed us. It is

equally true that at other times in the same period we had been within an ace of sweeping success, and yet complete success had not been achieved. It seemed as though God were withholding success from us, during this period, although He kept us from disaster. So far as the Western land front was concerned, it is true to say that, generally speaking, the weather had been unfavourable to our operations, while it favoured those of the enemy. These things gave many food for thought. They noticed that the phenomena coincided in time with a complete absence of national prayer to God. During the period in question, although many individuals and organizations urged the people to seek God in prayer, yet there was no official move in that direction. The Government issued no call for prayer.

It was not until about the 1st of July, 1918, that a decision was taken by the Government to issue such a call. The date chosen was the 4th of August — the fourth anniversary of the beginning of the war. Immediately when that decision was taken, a remarkable change came over the situation. On the 18th of July, Marshal Foch gained a signal victory over the Germans between the Aisne and the Marne, and caused them to effect a hasty and costly withdrawal. On the 8th of August, four days after the day appointed to seek God's help, began the Battle of Amiens — the first of a series of brilliant victories in the British sector, which in a hundred days, brought about the complete downfall of the German Army, and brought to an end the power of the German nation to continue the war. In these hundred days God's help was manifest in many ways. The weather which hitherto had mostly been unfavourable to us, now was just what we needed.

One instance out of many may be of interest. It was decided that our first attack should take place in front of Amiens. It was obviously most necessary to keep the enemy in ignorance of this decision, and elaborate precautions were taken to make him think that the attack would be launched elsewhere. To launch an offensive of the scale intended, involved the collection of a vast force of all arms. The component parts of this force were mostly moved by night, and hidden, so far as was possible by day. But the day came

when all the available cover around and behind Amiens was full to the saturation point. Many units had to be disposed in the open, and eventually, for the two final days before the opening of the assault, the number of such units was so great that concealment was impossible, and any hostile aircraft coming over would be bound to see them. If that had happened, there was only one inference which the Germans could have drawn, and surprise would have been impossible. But, during those two critical days, the weather was such that flying was almost impossible. In any event, no German aircraft came over; the surprise was complete, and our attack overwhelmingly successful.

Again, I realize that difficult questions arise when we consider the part the weather plays in God's plans. While there is no doubt that it helped us then, it is equally true that it was unfavourable to us in June and July, 1944, when we invaded Normandy. The weather, of course, affects other things besides military operations. It is a question about which different opinions may be held, and in any case it cannot be discussed here. But the instance I have quoted, in August 1918, coupled as it was with the first official day of National Prayer, and the unexpectedly complete successes which followed, caused many persons to think seriously. Was it just a coincidence, or was there a real connection between these things? Was it a clear example of cause and effect when we gained striking successes after asking God for His help? Many of those in high places thought that this was so. The writer thinks so too.

The conditions for effective national prayer are much the same as those which apply in the case of individuals, and the more the conditions are fulfilled the more effective will the prayer be. Humbleness, acknowledgment of and turning from sin, trust in God rather than in man, and willingness to walk in the path of obedience to Him, are all necessary. Happy is the nation which seeks God in this way. As David said: "Blessed is the people whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 144:15).

## Chapter 8

### The Bible

JUST as we need food to sustain our physical life, so we need spiritual food to nourish our spiritual life, and it is God's Book, the Bible, which provides us with that food. We can feed on it and obtain from it the sustenance we need; and without such food we can neither retain our spiritual stature and strength, nor "grow in grace" as God would have us grow. In this chapter I have endeavoured to outline some of the lessons I have learned, and to indicate the real practical help which one can obtain from the study of God's Word.

Just as one has frequent meals, so one should feed on the Word of God constantly and regularly. It is one of the ways, in addition to prayer, by which God speaks to us, and we need to listen to His voice frequently; and just as we start with breakfast in order to fortify ourselves for the work of the day, so we also need to partake of our spiritual breakfast. This meal will probably consist of two courses, prayer and Bible Reading, though the two may merge into each other. I have found that nothing can adequately take the place of this "morning watch," when we meet God before we meet the world, and listen to Him and speak to Him before we have dealings with our fellows. That is the time when our minds are fresh, and the distractions of things around us have not yet made themselves felt. This quiet time over the Word of God fortifies us to meet the difficulties and dangers of the day, and without it we are obviously ill-equipped to meet them. The Word of God can definitely provide us with sustenance which will affect our well-being throughout the day.

But breakfast is not the only meal we normally have — we partake of others during the day. This gives us a chance of getting free,

for a short time, from the distracting activities on which we may be quite properly engaged, and coming again into real contact with our God. The practical value of such a habit is very real. We are the losers if we do not take advantage of such opportunities as God gives us to "renew our strength," and so "mount up with wings as eagles." But why is it we value God's Word, and what does the Bible mean to us? This is a question that merits close consideration and a clear answer.

In the first place, the Bible tells us something we greatly need to know, and which we could not know otherwise, namely what God thinks about the deep problems of life. It may be very interesting to learn what certain men think about these things, but their opinions do not take us very far, nor do they give us any firm ground on which to build, since they frequently disagree among themselves, nor does it matter very much what I think — although some of us like to dwell upon that, and shut our eyes to the fact that such opinion has but little value. But we do need to know what God thinks, since that is what matters. It may sometimes be a shock to us and our self-complacency to learn what God thinks, and it would be surprising if that were not so. We learn, on the authority of God Himself, that His thoughts are different and much higher than our thoughts; and, if we are wise, we must surely bow to what He thinks, instead of pitting our puny intelligence against the wisdom of the Creator of the Universe.

One of the results of this acceptance of God's view, is that we are able to speak with absolute confidence and assurance about the deep mysteries of life, and speak of them in a definite and precise way. One of the characteristics of the present day is the vagueness and uncertainty which pervade most statements about the spiritual realm. No one seems to be sufficiently sure of his ground to speak definitely and clearly about these things. Difficulties are slurred over or avoided ("by-passed" to use a current military phrase), and are not faced and, therefore, not overcome. This state of affairs is largely due to the fact that so many of us depend upon what man thinks. Of course, such dependence is vain, since it does not provide

the solid foundation on which we can build with confidence. But when we find out what God thinks, what He has seen fit to reveal to us in the Scriptures, then, immediately, the situation changes, and we find a sure foundation. "Thus saith the Lord" is more than a mere collection of words. It is a fact which we can prove in the experience of our lives, and which removes, once and for all, all doubt, uncertainty and fear. As we listen to what He has to say, we find there is a solution for many (in fact for all) of the difficulties which we thought were insoluble, and which, for that reason, we in our folly were not willing to face. Since God has revealed His mind in the Scriptures, we need no longer live in a fool's paradise, or fear to face facts.

Moreover, since the Bible contains God's mind, it tells us many things which otherwise we could not possibly know. How, for instance, could we have known His plan of salvation, and His remedy for sin? These are things which we could never have thought of ourselves. They are far beyond the wit of man to devise. Without His explanation many of the facts of history, including the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, would be enigmas beyond our understanding. In His Book we find revealed the broad outline of His purposes for men and nations, and without the key which it affords, we would be hopelessly bewildered, and even in despair. Without His revelation, we could have no hope of the future life, and we would be forced into the miserable position of saying, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." Life would have no purpose and no prospect. Compare that with the wonderful position in which the child of God finds himself today. The enjoyment of the "great and glorious hope," and the wonderful panorama unfolded before us, is one of the direct results of God's good gift to us of the "Holy Scriptures which made us wise unto salvation," with all that the phrase involves.

And what is recorded in the Scriptures are not tribal legends handed down from generation to generation. We read that "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." God not only gave them the subject matter, but also the words, and He

watched over the old documents in which they were recorded so that the Scriptures could be handed down to us, and bring to us God's great revelation to man.

In the Bible we get not only an infallible guide to what we should believe, but also to the way in which we should conduct ourselves. For both these reasons we need to study it deeply, and ask (and allow) God, the Writer of the Book, to make us understand it. It may be a revelation to us to find out how much faith and conduct go together, and how much they react on each other. We find that our faith, and the things of the spirit generally, are not a separate department of our life, isolated from the ordinary everyday life which we live. The two are one. Many of us, perhaps, have failed to recognize that fact, and we have not, as we say, allowed religion "to obtrude into our ordinary life." What a lot we have lost while we followed that delusion, and how our usefulness for God has suffered thereby. The child of God is exhorted in the Scriptures to live so as to glorify God, and attract others to Him. He is constantly urged to ensure that there is nothing in his conduct which is inconsistent with his profession. Running right through the Bible we find this underlying thought, and it is crystallized in a number of chapters in the New Testament in which the details of our conduct are discussed. We do well to ponder these chapters carefully and prayerfully. Such a study is like constantly referring to the compass, to ensure that we are continuing on the correct course. It is amazing how easily we can diverge from it. The beginnings of such deviation only too often pass unnoticed. The deviation becomes more and more pronounced, until we realize, to our horror, how far we have left the true course. A constant scrutiny of our lives under the searchlight of Holy Scripture is a very necessary precaution for all of us. We are, perhaps, more ready to apply this scrutiny to others than to ourselves. I do not find that in Scripture we are told to examine one another; but we are exhorted to examine ourselves. We are, moreover, exhorted to go further than that, and to invite the holy and all-seeing God to examine us. "Search me, O Lord, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me."

If we pray that prayer with sincerity, and are genuinely willing to act on the result of it, God will be able to make us "vessels unto honour, meet for the Master's use." It is a humbling process, the purging away of the dross, but without it we cannot become vessels meet for the Master's use.

I have found it very profitable to read over, from time to time, the exhortations as to conduct which God has given us in certain chapters of the New Testament. Such a study can be, and generally is, very searching, but for that reason all the more necessary and valuable. Some of the chapters which I have found especially helpful in this respect are Romans 12; Ephesians 4 and 5; Colossians 3; 1 Thessalonians 5; and 1 Peter 5; but, of course, there are also many other portions of God's Word which need to be studied as well. We cannot over-estimate the importance of leading holy lives. We are under the close scrutiny of men who watch us far more closely than we realize, and who largely form their opinion of God and of Christ by what they see in us. That being so, we may be thankful that God has given us such clear guidance in the Scriptures, in order to help us to avoid the many pitfalls around us. Thank God, we may "cleanse our way by taking heed thereto according to His word." Thus He will hold up our goings in His paths that our footsteps slip not.

But not only does the Bible help us to face and overcome the many outside difficulties which confront all of us. In one sense the Bible is a record of the deliverances given by God to His followers from difficulties and dangers of all sorts. These deliverances not only concern the whole period covered by the Old and New Testaments, but they are, thank God, equally applicable to us in the twentieth century. We are expressly told that "the things which were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:9). Many of us have found how wonderfully true that is, and that though the Bible was written, in its latest portions, 1900 years ago,

yet it is the most up-to-date Book in the world, since it exactly meets our needs in the present day.

I have certainly found it so in the varying experiences of my Army life, and never more outstandingly so than during the siege of Malta. We were then faced with many and great difficulties, but I found that we were not the first to be so situated. I read of many who in the olden times had been faced with similar problems, and with difficulties which must have seemed to them to be equally great as were those confronting us in Malta. I read, moreover, that when they asked for God's help, and asked in faith, He gave it them and delivered them. Not once nor twice did this happen, but over and over again. The Book of God is full of the records of these happenings, and I learned (as already stated) that these records had been deliberately placed there for our learning, so that we might have comfort and hope.

I read, for instance, of King Asa, who lived some 2800 years ago. His country was threatened by a great army of the Ethiopians — far stronger than anything he could put in the field against them. We are told that Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, "Lord, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God, for we trust in Thee ..." The next verse gives the answer: "So the Lord smote the Ethiopians."

Have we learned from that story (which was written for our learning) the lessons God would teach us? Do we know that numbers are of little value? It is God's help that matters, and God is not necessarily on the side of the "big battalions," as some would cynically assert.

Another instance which was much help to us in Malta, was the case of King Jehoshaphat. He was attacked by the Ammonites and Moabites, and humanly speaking, the situation was desperate, and little hope appeared on his horizon. He, likewise, spoke to God, and implored His help: "We have no might against this great company, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon Thee." God's answer was one we may still take to heart today: "Be not afraid,

for the battle is not yours, but God's." And as the sequel shows, God wrought a great deliverance for His people.

These and many other instances recorded in the Bible were naturally a tremendous encouragement to me, and I believe, to many others in Malta. They so exactly fitted our case that we might have thought that they had been expressly written for us. And indeed, in one sense, this was true. The Bible really was a practical Book to us.

But as we further study God's Word, and His deliverances, we notice that usually He requires man to do his part. It is exceptional for God to say, "Stand aside, and watch Me act on your behalf." He does not expect us to ask for His help in order that we may sit back and take our ease. He calls us to do our duty to the limit of our powers, while relying on Him to bring about our deliverance. Nehemiah, in his time of stress, realized this truth. "We prayed to our God and set a watch." That is the right combination. As Oliver Cromwell put it, "Trust in God, and keep your powder dry." We tried to adopt this procedure in Malta. We did all we could possibly think of in order to ensure the security of the fortress. But our reliance was on God.

Much more might be written about this inexhaustible theme. We do well to study our Lord's attitude to the Bible as it existed in His day. This attitude of His settles for all time many questions about the Old Testament raised in modern times. Many other lines of study are profitable as well. May we learn to value this wonderful Book aright, and as we study it, may we become "wise unto salvation."

## Chapter 9

### Service

As we have already seen, not only do we need fresh air and food for our physical well-being, but we need exercise as well. In the spiritual sphere the counterpart of this may be taken to be service. Prayer and Bible study, essential as they are, are not all. In one sense they can be regarded as means to an end, rather than ends in themselves. The end to which they lead is effective service of God.

We must, at the outset, be quite clear about the reason for our existence. According to the revelation which God has given us, it is to give pleasure to Him, "For Thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11). That is the reason given in the most general terms. But Christ defines it more precisely. We may wonder why we are left here after we have become children of God through faith in Christ, and His purposes of grace so far as we are concerned have thus been fulfilled. Why does He not take us home immediately, and so fulfill His expressed desire, "that those whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me where I am"? He answers this question by telling us that He leaves us here in order that we may be His witnesses. God, in His wisdom, has decreed that the good news of what He has done for us through Christ shall be spread among men who have come to know it themselves. This is His almost invariable rule. It is very exceptional for anyone to come to a knowledge of the salvation of Christ, without some human being having been a link in the chain which has led to that result. Man's nature is such that he is usually more influenced by the experience and testimony of other men, than by mere abstract considerations.

Christ made His purpose in this matter very clear, in His answer to the man of Gadara, out of whom He had cast the legion of devils. This man, rejoicing in his deliverance, and filled with grateful affection for his deliverer,

naturally desired to go with Him as He left the country. Jesus did not allow this, but said to him, "Go home to thy friends and tell them (show them, Luke 8:39) how great things the Lord hath done for thee and has had compassion on thee" (Mark 5:19). And so He says to us. He leaves us here for this one purpose that we may pass the good news on to others, and bring it home to them by the one and only argument which will carry weight, namely our own personal experience of the thing, and the Person of whom we speak. All our service for Him while we are down here must have that in view, and in one way or another, both directly and indirectly, be a means to that end. Later on, when we are with Him in heaven we will be serving Him, perhaps in a different way. "His servants shall serve Him" (Revelation 22:3). Our service here may well be a preparation for that higher service later on.

If we are to serve Him here effectively in this way, it is of the first importance that the motive which prompts that service shall be the right one.

Grudging service is of little value, it must be con amore. Service of which the motive power is love and gratitude, is the only kind which is really effective, and the only kind which brings happiness to the servant. Service which is looked upon simply as a duty (perhaps a disagreeable one), which has to be got through, is of a very poor quality, and on a very low level, though through the frailty of our human nature it too often has this characteristic. When once the wonder of what Christ has done for us, and His amazing love to us, has flooded our soul, we cannot help but love Him in return, and be eager to do anything in our power to show our love, and to speak of the One who fills our horizon. Service based on such a motive is not only pleasing to Him, but is a joy to us, and can be used by God for His glory.

But there is another motive as well, which really arises out of the first, and is important. Not only is the love of God generated in our hearts, but through it is love for man too. We cannot but be struck, as we read the Gospel narrative, by the underlying motives

of Christ's ministry on earth. Not only was His desire to do His Father's will always in evidence, but so, too, was His deep compassion for the masses around Him, and for the individuals whom He met. That, too, must be a motive for our service. We, by the grace of God, have found a good thing. We should, therefore, desire to share it with others who have, as yet, not received it.

In natural things sharing has its drawbacks, since it reduces the amount which we can keep. But not so in spiritual things. God's store is inexhaustible, and by the alchemy of His providence the more we give the more we have, as the disciples found when they distributed the few loaves among the 5,000, and at the end they had more than they had started with. The need around us is desperately great, and God says to us, "Give ye them to eat." Have we any feelings of compassion for those around us, as He has? Will we allow Him to show His compassion to them through us, or on account of our callousness will they never know of it? This, again, is a matter in regard to which we need to search ourselves. May He so warm our hearts toward Him that we will have compassion on those others for whom He died, and share with them the good things He has given us! Compassion does not involve any suggestion of patronizing superiority. Far from it. We have found how great is our unworthiness, and yet, in spite of all, His amazing grace has been given us! Therefore, we very humbly but gladly and confidently desire to tell others of that One Who has done all this for us, and Who will also meet their need as He has met ours.

The motive for service is important.

The form of service may be extremely varied, and includes service in life as well as by lip. In fact, everything we do and everything we say, should be done and said as part of our service for Him. Our service is not confined to stated periods. It is not true that part of the day is God's, and the rest is our own. We are on duty the whole time. This fact lends dignity and significance to the most humdrum and apparently trivial things we do, and makes the well-doing of them important.

But deeds and words do not form the whole of our life, though

they are the parts which others see. They are affected profoundly by the thoughts of our hearts and minds. It is, therefore, most important that these thoughts which affect our actions and our words should be kept in subjection to God. The Bible tells us how this may be done. If the God of Peace dwells in us, the "peace of God shall garrison our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7). Again, "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established." As the fortress of our hearts is garrisoned by the Holy Spirit, so will our thoughts be kept pure, since they will be prompted by Him, and there will be no room for any thoughts to be influenced by the enemy of our souls.

We have, in a previous chapter, considered the importance of living holy lives, in which sin does not have dominion over us. As we now see, all our actions are, or should be, part of our service for God, so the importance of their quality becomes still more evident. We will not go further into the matter now, but it is one we must always be remembering, and we must ever be watching, and praying, that the quality may not deteriorate.

In our service through the medium of words, we need also to be watchful and prayerful. For one thing, as we have already seen, we want to tell others what we have actually experienced ourselves. It is this kind of first-hand evidence which carries weight, and to which men give heed. As in the case of the man of Gadara, we need to tell of what Christ has done for us. Are we quite clear about what He has done? Do we realize that He actually loved us enough to give His life in order to redeem us? Do we realize that we have been able to make no contribution to this work of His beyond gratefully accepting it? Can we say that we "know whom we have believed, and are persuaded that He is able to keep us?" Can we say that He does keep us? Do we know anything of His companionship, friendship, and help? These, and many other like things, we want to pass on to others as being our own experience. We must not presume to give evidence about that concerning which we have no personal first-hand and definite knowledge. We can only

say what we know ourselves. We are to be His witnesses, i.e., witnesses of Him — it is to the Person Himself, rather than to something about Him, to whom we desire to bear witness. However little our knowledge of Him may be, that knowledge we need to pass on. We must be scrupulously truthful in our evidence.

This is the sort of thing which the world around us needs to know, and longs to know. Abstruse questions of ethics and philosophy may have their attraction, but the Good News of Jesus Christ — what He has done, and what He is to me — must come first. It is on that knowledge as the foundation, that everything is built. The fact of Christ and His Redemptive Work is the foundation, and when that foundation has been well and truly laid, then, and not till then, can we interest ourselves in the super-structure.

Service by lip may be either to an individual, or to a gathering of people. In either case what has been written above will apply. Bearing these things in mind, it is necessary for the young Christian, as well as for those who are further along the road, to seek to know how God would specially have him serve Him. Apart from the ordinary duties of life, which are part of our service to Him, as we have seen, and which must be done to His glory, there may be, and usually is, some special way in which God desires us to work for Him. He must choose that way for us, and we must prayerfully find out from Him what is His choice for us. We must have a ready mind, and be willing to obey as soon as He indicates His will. It may be some very simple and humble form of service. We must gratefully accept that honour, and do it for His glory. It is not for us to insist on God giving us something more showy — such a desire has an element of pride in it, and therefore must be discounted. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much," and just as in mundane tasks, God usually leads us to begin with the simpler forms of service. But what a difference there is between His service and that of the world! However humble the job He gives us to do, we can do it to His glory, we labour for Him, and as His representative. We can never really get away from the privilege and honour it is to serve Him at all, even in the humblest capacity.

He must choose for us the work He wants us to do, and we must gladly obey.

Another point to remember is that, however simple and humble the task, it must be done in His strength. That is needed for all service. There is nothing which we do for Him in which we are not absolutely dependent on Him for its effective execution. The devil will constantly try to blind us to this great fact. He will try to get us to rely on our own aptitude or cleverness, and thus spoil the work of God. The devil will use every artifice to accomplish this end, and many of us have had frequent and unpleasant proofs of his cunning devices. Here the divine garrison of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is the only safeguard. The danger is very real and great. He, and He alone, can keep us from it.

One of the devil's favorite weapons in these attacks is flattery. It so often elicits a response from the pride within us that it is a particularly dangerous weapon. Perhaps we have been delivering an address. The devil whispers to us, "That was a fine address; people were obviously greatly impressed. Well done!" Sometimes he uses others, very well-meaning and kindly persons, to deliver his message. However it comes to us, may the Holy Spirit of God keep us from succumbing to it, and at all costs keep us humble before Him.

Another suggestion which the devil makes to us (and especially as we get older and the more senior in our profession) is that we should make full use of any prestige we may have, or think we have. He says to us: "God has given you this position, this prestige. It would be a great mistake not to make full use of it for His glory"; and before we know where we are, we find ourselves relying on worldly position and prestige, rather than on God. Simple, humble reliance on Him is what we need, and nothing must be allowed to insert itself, so that the other is pushed on one side. God tells us that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal." Such weapons are quite ineffective in His service. But the weapons which He puts in our hands — faith in Him, reliance on Him — are wonderfully effective to the "pulling down of strongholds."

May we see to it that Satan does not succeed in getting us to lay these weapons down, so as to grasp the useless ones he would put into our hands.

We must also remember that acts of service may need careful preparation. This is necessary if they are to be effective. We must be ready and willing to carry out this preparation. An injunction of our Lord is sometimes misquoted in this connection. When He told His disciples, "Take no thought how or what ye shall ... say" (Luke 12:11), He was referring to some very particular circumstances. This injunction, therefore, provides no excuse for laziness on our part. If He calls us to serve Him by giving an address, He expects us to take the trouble to prepare it, and to seek from Him through His Word and by prayer, the message He would have us give. Not only is that preparation necessary for the effectiveness of the message; it is wonderfully helpful to ourselves. Anything which brings us to study God's Word closely, and to get into intimate touch with Him by prayer, is of the greatest value to us.

Since it must be God Who chooses the form our service is to take from time to time, we may find that sometimes the work is strange to us. We may feel that it is beyond our powers, and for that reason we hesitate to attempt it. Moses felt like that when God spoke to him about leading His people out of Egypt. His hesitation was natural, and is easily understood. We may say that it showed a becoming modesty about his powers, and for that reason was commendable. Jeremiah felt the same, and so did other of God's servants. This hesitancy might be permissible if it were true, as they appeared to think, that success depended on their efforts. But it did not thus depend on them. God said to Moses, "Certainly I will be with thee," and to Jeremiah, "Be not afraid ... for I am with thee." That fact entirely changed the whole situation. It was God's strength which would do the work. They were simply to be the instruments in His hands. It was His presence which would ensure success. And when they put Him to the test, and followed the path of obedience, they found that this certainly was so.

And so it is with us. When God calls us to a particular piece of

service, we cannot doubt that He will give the needed strength and wisdom to see it through. Do we feel it is beyond our powers? So much the better, since we will then rely more on God. Paul learned this lesson. "When I am weak, then am I strong." "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Just as an earthly commander does not issue an order without ensuring that the means are available for carrying it out, so does our all-wise God deal with us. "Lo, I am with you alway," is a sufficient guarantee that all the needed grace and help will be given to enable us to carry out His will. Our part is to ascertain His will, and then to carry it out in complete reliance upon Him. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

As a practical point, it is advisable, and likely to be in the line of God's will, to back up existing efforts being made by certain organizations, or by individuals, to spread the knowledge of the Gospel. Such action on our part will bring great encouragement to others who are perhaps working under great difficulties, just as unexpected reinforcements may greatly encourage a hard-pressed garrison. By such action we will save valuable time and derive the advantages of combined and coordinated efforts. All this, of course, is dependent on God's indicating it as His will, which it very often will prove to be. When one is serving abroad, the Christian, of whatever rank or category, should, as a matter of course, search out the missionaries of the country, and make himself known to them. By so doing he will not only refresh and encourage some children of God who may be having an uphill fight, and are feeling their burdens heavy, but he will also be greatly helped and refreshed himself. He will find that it is like enjoying the rest and peace of an oasis in a hard and inhospitable desert. By watching the servants of God bringing the message of the Gospel to those shrouded in darkness, his own perspective will be corrected, he will see things in their true light, and appraise them at their right value. His will be the gain.

We do well, also, to remember that Christian Missions have made a big contribution to the well-being of our Empire, and indeed of

the whole world. Although it is the fashion in some quarters to decry their value, yet I have never found anyone doing so to whom Christ meant much personally. We who, by God's grace, do know something of Him, will surely want to share that knowledge with others, and to this end will be glad to encourage and support those men and women who are trying to carry it to others who have not heard the Good News.

# Chapter 10

## The Miracle of Malta

### *(a) The Human Resources: The Problem of Defence.*

THE story of the Siege of Malta from 1940 to 1942 is so rich in illustrations of God's help and of His intervention, that it is worth recording. My experiences there were the culminating ones of my active military career, and perhaps for that reason have impressed themselves very deeply on my mind. The lessons I learned there of God's faithfulness to help in time of trouble will not, I hope, be forgotten by me — and because these lessons may be of help to others in different circumstances, I venture to record them. One cannot understand the problem of the defence of Malta unless one realizes the situation which obtained when the siege began. This has been touched on briefly in Chapter 1, but it will be a help to go rather more fully into it here.

There were several factors which affected the defence problem in a special way. The first of these was the extreme isolation of Malta in the summer of 1940. As will be remembered, at that time the British Empire was standing entirely alone. France had just been crushed, and was no longer our ally; consequently the French territories bordering on the Mediterranean which, up till then, had been friendly territories to us, were no longer so. This deprived us of the use of Tunisia, which is very close to Malta, as well as of other territories more distant. There was, thus, no friendly territory on or in the Mediterranean other than Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Egypt and Palestine. The nearest of these was nearly 1,000 miles from Malta.

But the exit of France from our side in the war synchronized with the entrance of Italy on the side of Germany. We therefore found ourselves not only deprived of old friends, but also confronted with new foes. The Italian territories were in very

dominating positions; besides the mainland of Italy there were Sardinia, Sicily, Libya, and the Dodecanese, situated in such a way as to bid fair to dominate the Mediterranean. These two things, the exit of France and the entrance of Italy, entirely upset the strategical situation, and Malta, with which we are now concerned, suddenly found herself in the very forefront of the battle, and far distant from any help.

Another important factor in the defence problem was the size of the civilian population on the Island. Malta is the most densely populated country in the world of its size, or greater. Apart from the garrison, there were no less than 2,700 persons to the square mile, and the proportion of children was unusually high. This state of affairs may be acceptable in ordinary circumstances, but it is the last thing one would choose for a fortress likely to have to fight for its life. Of course, this density of population reacted very definitely and very seriously on the food problem. Such density precludes any possibility of producing anything like enough food on the Island to meet the needs of its people. Nearly all the food they need has to be brought by sea, as well as everything else required, since practically nothing can be produced on Malta. We were, therefore, faced with the fact that the continued safety of the fortress depended on our being able to get the necessary ships into Malta from time to time. In view of the prevailing situation, this was not a pleasant outlook. The Royal Navy and Merchant Navy were faced with a terribly difficult problem. But it would have to be solved if the island were to be held. One may say, here, that, bad as the situation was in this respect at the beginning of the siege, it got progressively worse as our position deteriorated in the Mediterranean, until, in the summer of 1942, it seemed frankly impossible. Sea power meant much to us in Malta.

But Malta had to be held for a number of reasons — the principal one being that it was needed as an offensive base. Italy, at that time, had a large and well-equipped army established in North Africa, an army which constituted a very definite threat to the safety of Egypt. It was stronger in numbers and better equipped

than was the force we had in Egypt at that time. It was obviously necessary, therefore, that we should do what we could to reduce the size of that hostile army or, at any rate, to keep it from growing too big. The way to do this was to attack the sea communications between Italy and North Africa, on which that army depended. Malta, was, owing to its geographical position, the place from which this could be done more conveniently and more effectively than anywhere else, and for this reason Malta was used as an offensive base. If it had not been so used, or if Malta had fallen, we would not have been able to exert that pressure on the enemy, and so influence the size of the force he was able to maintain in North Africa, as, in point of fact, we did. He would have been able to pile up in North Africa as large a force as he chose, and that force might have been too strong for the defenders of Egypt to deal with it. If Malta had fallen we might not have been able to hold Egypt. It is hardly necessary to enlarge on the results which might have followed such a major disaster. That was the chief reason why we had to hold Malta. Another reason was that the island was needed as a landing place for aircraft flying between Great Britain and Egypt. Without that landing ground a tremendous delay would have attended our efforts to reinforce our Air Forces in the Middle East.

Another factor in the defence problem was, of course, the size and composition of the garrison of Malta when Italy declared war against us. When it became evident that Italy was likely soon to be our active enemy, the garrison of Malta would have been strengthened, if it had been possible to do so. But the situation in Great Britain was such that this natural precaution could not be taken. Our expeditionary force, comprising as it did the bulk of our trained personnel and nearly all our material, was forced to leave France and Belgium. Although, in the goodness of God, the greater part of the personnel was rescued, yet we lost nearly all our precious material, and for the time our army was not in being. Meanwhile, it was expected that the victorious German armies in France would, without delay, invade our home base. In view of the state of the

army at that time it was obviously impossible that any of it could be spared to go overseas to reinforce other places. Every unit was needed at home, so as to put up some sort of defence against the expected invasion. That was the policy decided on, and there is no doubt that it was the right one. We in Malta, recognized that it was right, and we realized that, for a time at any rate, we would have to depend for our defence on such resources that we happened to have in the fortress.

These, as it will be seen, were unbelievably meager. Attack was not only possible, but likely, in a variety of forms. There was, in the first place, the likelihood of a full-scale invasion by sea and air. The Italians had for a long time been boasting that this was what they intended to do as soon as war was declared. They expected, so they said, to capture the fortress within a day or two. Then there was the likelihood of heavy aerial bombardment, intended to crush all resistance; moreover, in addition, there was always the danger of the close investment of the fortress with a view to starving it into submission. This last was a danger which could not be countered from within; it had to be dealt with from without; but the other two had to be met by the garrison of the fortress and overcome by them alone. To meet the air danger we needed fighter aircraft and anti-aircraft guns. Of both of these we had hardly any. No aircraft had at that time been allotted to Malta for its defence. They were all needed elsewhere; but we were able to lay our hands on four Gloster-Gladiator fighters, which were found in cases in the dock-yard stores, and were reserved for the Fleet Air Arm of the Mediterranean Fleet. These were slow, out-of-date machines, but they were all we had, and it was with them that we started the air war against the strong Regia Aeronautica. The air officer commanding (Air Commodore Maynard) did what he could to train some of his officers in fighter technique, of which they had had no previous experience. Thus, in all respects, our air force in Malta was a makeshift affair.

So far as anti-aircraft guns were concerned, we were nearly as badly off. We had sixteen only with which to protect the many vital spots — and these guns were mostly of an obsolescent type;

they did not include any light A.A. guns for dealing with low-flying aircraft. Thus it will be seen that our air defences generally were hopelessly defective.

As regards the danger of invasion, our other resources to meet it were also thoroughly inadequate. We needed infantry to watch and to defend the various sea beaches where such landings could be made (and there were more than thirty miles of beaches to be watched in this way), as well as to defend the various places within the Island where airborne landings might, and probably would, be attempted. To do all that with any degree of adequacy we needed a strong force of infantry. Actually, we had four battalions of the Regular Army, beside one Maltese Territorial battalion, which was in the throes of reorganization at the time, and for that reason (and that reason alone) was not then fully effective. This danger was, therefore, a serious and real one, especially when one remembers that the enemy would have had practically complete air supremacy, had he made the attempt.

It has been computed that the strength of all the three fighting services, including all branches of these services, available for the defence of Malta at that time, might have totalled 5,000 officers and men. It certainly did not exceed that figure. An interesting sidelight is thrown on this by consideration of the strength of the Italian garrison in a somewhat similar island fortress nearby — Pantellaria. It was smaller than Malta, and therefore required fewer men for its defence. But when we captured it we took 15,000 to 20,000 of its garrison prisoner.

In order to get a true picture of the situation we must remember that there was no prospect of our getting reinforcements for an unspecified period, during which we would have to make the best use we could of these very limited resources which we happened to have.

Finally, we knew that the Italians knew exactly what our defensive resources were. It was not possible to make them imagine that our garrison was much stronger than it actually was.

Any decision they took would be taken with an accurate knowledge of the real facts.

But it was good to remember that God's deliverance does not depend on the size of our force. "It is nothing with Thee to help with many, or with them which have no strength" (2 Chronicles 14:11).

## Chapter 11

### The Miracle of Malta

#### *(b) The Solution of the Problem*

IN the previous chapter I have tried to indicate the problem of the defence of Malta as it presented itself to us in June, 1940, when the Siege of Malta began. We have seen the difficulties of that problem owing to the extreme inadequacy of our resources both of material and personnel, and at the same time we have been impressed with the paramount necessity of keeping hold on Malta in spite of all the difficulties.

It was obvious to us that our human resources were woefully inadequate, and many of us were constrained to turn our eyes to "the hills, from whence cometh my help." As I have indicated in an earlier chapter, God's Word was a great standby to me, and doubtless to many others, too, at this time. In it I read how God had helped His people in old times when they were faced with situations similar to that confronting us. And God reminded us that although outward circumstances have changed since those days in many ways, and although the problem might be enunciated in different words, yet God, the solver of problems, does not change. He is the same today as He has ever been, and "His hand is not shortened that it cannot save." The difficulty is likely to rest with us, either that we do not exercise the simple faith which lays hold on that power, or that our "iniquities separate between us and God," so that He cannot use it on our behalf. Many persons in Malta, both in responsible and other positions, did, I think, realize our need of His help, and were prepared to ask Him to give it us. By no other means could we be sure of holding this vital outpost of the Empire, and so we turned to Him Who alone is the giver of victory. It was in these circumstances that I issued the Special Order of the Day quoted in Chapter I. At the same time I issued another addressed

to the people of Malta. It was worded differently, but the sense was much the same, and it helped, perhaps, to turn the minds of the people away from their difficulties and fears to the great God Who alone could deliver.

I humbly believe that God, in His mercy, answered the prayers offered to Him in this way, and in the two years and more of the siege which followed His help was very obvious and very real.

At about the same time, I was greatly encouraged by a telegram I received from the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir Edmund Ironside (later, Field Marshal Lord Ironside). It showed me that others in high places at home were thinking along the same lines as we were in Malta. The telegram, which was addressed to me personally, contained the reference, "Deuteronomy, chapter 3, verse 22." I looked up the verse in my Bible, and I read: "Ye shall not fear them: for the Lord your God He shall fight for you." This was a very welcome and timely reminder of a great and well-proved truth, and, coming as it did from a person in his position, and being addressed to one in mine, in view of the special circumstances of the time, it meant much to us.

I have said that the help which God gave was very obvious and real. The same help was noticed at the time of the withdrawal from Dunkirk, and during the "Battle of Britain." It certainly was so in the "Battle of Malta." During the two years which followed the declaration of war by Italy, God's protecting hand was so much in evidence that people were noticing it, and remarking on it. On a number of occasions officers came to me and said quite spontaneously: "Do you know, sir, I think that Someone up there (pointing upwards) has been helping us today." I no doubt replied, "Yes I think so too," and I may have added, "You may remember we asked Him to help us, and today we have been watching Him doing it." Such a conversation took place not once nor twice, but a number of times. As I unfold the story of the siege, the fact of His help will become more and more evident.

Italy did not attempt the invasion we expected immediately after the outbreak of war, nor, indeed, at any other time. It is a truly

remarkable thing that the attempt was not made, especially in the early days of the siege, when we were so weak, a fact of which Italy was fully aware. At that time the advantages would all have lain with her, and the prospect, from our point of view, was by no means rosy. But Italy did not make the attempt, in spite of her boastings that she was going to do so. We are justified in asking "Why?" By the same token we are justified in asking another question, "Why did not the Germans invade Great Britain immediately after Dunkirk?" It is difficult to find satisfactory answers to either of these questions, at any rate on the human level. It seems that our two enemies each made a colossal blunder when they did not seize the opportunities given them of gaining a decisive success. What caused them to make these blunders? The only reason which I can find, and which seems to cover the facts, is that in each case God's restraining hand kept them from attacking us at a time when we were very ill-prepared to meet such an attack. If this is so, and I firmly believe it is, it was not the first time that God has acted in this way. Scripture has many instances of just this thing, instances which are recorded for our comfort and hope.

As I have said, we were expecting the invasion from the moment Italy entered the war. But though it did not materialize then, yet the danger hung over us for a considerable time, while the weakness of our garrison remained unrelieved. Actually, no reinforcements of any size were received for more than four months, and during the whole of that time, and indeed for some time afterwards, this danger persisted. Thus God's restraining hand continued to be strong for us for a long period. It was not just one instantaneous act of deliverance, it was a long-drawn-out process.

We have found how prone we are to limit the help that God gives. We say, "He has undoubtedly helped us so far — but we cannot expect Him to go on doing so indefinitely." We seem to imagine that God's help is subject to the law of averages or of mathematical probabilities. Thank God, that is not so. Such a thought is dishonoring to our Heavenly Father. He can deliver us not only for a day, but for a week, a month, a year, or for any other period.

He can go on delivering us for as long as He sees we need deliverance. That is one of the lessons He graciously taught us in the Siege of Malta.

But although we did not experience the invasion we expected, yet we were immediately subjected to another form of attack, aerial bombardment. I have already shown how ill-prepared we were to meet it. Not only had we hardly any fighter aircraft, and a very meager number of anti-aircraft guns, but the dense population of Malta rendered this form of attack peculiarly dangerous. In the early morning of the 11th of June, 1940, the Italian bombers came over Malta and dropped their loads, causing much devastation and many casualties, especially among the civil population. This attack was repeated many times that day, and on many subsequent days, until these visitations became the commonplace experiences of the everyday life of the people of Malta. By the time we left Malta, some two years later, the fortress had been subjected to over 2,000 bombing attacks.

These first attacks were delivered at a time when the British Empire had had very little actual experience of air attack. Malta was, in fact, the first part of the Empire to sustain heavy attack from the air. Consequently, the experience was a new one, and the dangers could not be properly assessed and understood. The peculiar terrors of the unknown were, therefore, the portion of the people of Malta at that time, a fact which undoubtedly added to the strain under which they lived. We had to evolve from experience, and sometimes bitter experience, the technique with which to deal with the new situation, and this, of course, was no easy task. But in spite of all these special difficulties and unknown perils, the people of Malta stood up to the ordeal in a truly remarkable way, and adapted themselves to the trying circumstances with commendable aptitude and resolute determination. Was it their innate realization of God, and their trust in Him, that brought them through their hard trials with flying colours? I think it was, and I think they would say that it was. Be that as it may, I feel that our Empire owes a great debt to that people for the invaluable

contribution they made, by their steadfastness, to the defence of Malta. Without their contribution the difficulties of the defence would have been immensely increased.

# Chapter 12

## The Miracle of Malta

### *(c) The Hand of God*

So the Siege of Malta began. Some things were very evident — our weakness, the enemy's strength, the impossibility of outside human help for the time being, and, not least, the vital importance to our country's cause of our holding on to Malta. These somber facts were not pleasant to contemplate, and by themselves would have given cause for despondency. But, fortunately, they did not constitute the whole picture. Behind all the human factors was God, with Whom human strength and human weakness matter but little. The horizon did indeed look black, but behind the clouds was the light of God's power.

As I, and others, contemplated these things, God's Word brought much encouragement. The story of Elisha at Dothan was much in my mind at that time. We were in the position of the servant who saw the enemy's host around the city: "Alas, my Master, how shall we do?" Elisha's answer means much to all who turn to God in their difficulties: "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them" (II Kings 6:16).

Hezekiah, also, had learned the same lesson. When faced with great dangers, and when his people were uneasy as they contemplated them, he said: "Be not afraid ... for there be more with us than with him: with him is the arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles." This was true in the case of Elisha at Dothan and Hezekiah at Jerusalem. It was also true for us in Malta in the tremendous and wonderful years 1940-1942. As in these other cases, God told us not to fear (the message from the Chief of the Imperial General Staff quoted in the last chapter bore this out). We did not, in Malta, as Elisha did in Dothan, see with our physical eyes the "horses and chariots of fire,"

yet we were very conscious of God's protecting hand, constantly evident in many ways. We saw it when He restrained the enemy from invading us at a time when we were ill-prepared to resist. We saw it in the results achieved by our pitifully weak air defences. We saw it in the steadfastness and courage of the people. We saw it in the achievements of the Royal Navy and Merchant Navy in bringing supplies to Malta, sometimes in seemingly impossible conditions. We saw it in many details, some big and some small, throughout the long-drawn-out period of siege, and as we now look back from the vantage point of a little distance, and see things, perhaps, in truer perspective — the very fact that, in spite of all her disadvantages, Malta has remained in British hands, and by the offensive action based on Malta she made a definite contribution toward our ultimate sweeping success in the Mediterranean — that, surely, is a miracle which cannot be gainsaid. It is God Who works such miracles.

A few incidents during the siege, which seem to illustrate this conclusion, may be of interest and help. They are only a few out of very many, and are not necessarily the most remarkable. But they deal with matters which are of more general interest than others.

In January, 1941, a convoy was brought to Malta. It was escorted by a considerable portion of the Mediterranean Fleet, and in the escort was a new aircraft carrier. H.M.S. *Illustrious*, a magnificent and very valuable ship. The convoy got into Malta, and the escort was maneuvering at sea some distance to the south. The German Luftwaffe had recently come to Sicily in considerable strength, in order to reduce our offensive activities at Malta. They attacked the Naval escort, and concentrated their efforts mainly against the H.M.S. *Illustrious*. In spite of heavy losses, they pressed the attack, and obtained a number of hits on her, causing severe damage. That evening, after dark, *Illustrious* limped into Malta, and was made fast alongside the dockyard. It was necessary to effect first-aid repairs, so that she might go to some other base for proper repair and reconditioning, which could not be effected at Malta.

Next morning, the German aircraft came over Malta and saw the *Illustrious* in the dockyard. They renewed their attacks on her, and persisted in them, with the object of immobilizing the ship, and preventing her from leaving Malta. She received several more hits, and, in addition, serious underwater damage was caused by "near misses" of some heavy bombs.

The situation looked extremely serious, for the prospects of saving the ship were very small. But at this time I was informed by the dockyard authorities that if there were no further damage it should be possible to get the ship to sea in four days' time. On the face of it this sounded encouraging, but the proviso, in reality, effectively discounted the encouragement, since damage had been constantly caused to the ship since she came to Malta. However, the statement was noted — and we hoped for the best. Some went further, and prayed earnestly that God would help us in our difficulty which, humanly speaking, seemed impossible to overcome. And He did.

The next day came. The attacks were renewed, but the Germans changed their tactics and bombed from a much greater height than before. They missed the ship — and no further damage was done! The same thing was experienced on the three following days; and, eventually, on the fourth day, after sunset, I saw the great ship steam out of the Grand Harbour and head for Alexandria, which she safely reached.

That incident made a big impression on me, and on many others in Malta. To us it was a miracle. We had been watching the hand of God at work.

A somewhat similar incident occurred to another warship in the spring of 1942. At this time the German Luftwaffe was again in Sicily, in much greater strength than before, and was subjecting Malta to very heavy and continuous attacks. H.M.S. *Penelope*, a light cruiser, based on Malta and operating against the enemy's sea communications with North Africa, was damaged, and had to be put into dry dock in Malta, while certain repairs were effected. During her time in dry dock, when she was in an unenviable and rather

helpless position, she was attacked over and over again by the Luftwaffe. The attacks were heavy, frequent and persistent. The danger was not only to the ship but to the dock as well. If the latter had received certain damage the ship could not have got to sea, even though she was not damaged herself. The fighter strength of Malta at that time was still most inadequate. Such fighters as we had, and the anti-aircraft guns of the fortress, as well as the guns of the ship herself, made heroic efforts to keep the enemy away, but did not achieve much success.

The ship sustained a good deal of damage, but although she had unbelievably narrow escapes, she did not receive vital damage — nor did the dock! The cruiser's safety was once seriously endangered by burning oil floating on the surface of the water, and approaching uncomfortably close to the dock where the ship was lying. But it did not quite reach it! In spite of all the efforts of the enemy, and in spite, humanly speaking, of the odds against her survival, she did survive. She was floated out of the dry dock, and one evening set sail for Gibraltar. But her adventures were not over. On the voyage, as she passed Pantellaria, and traversed the Sicilian narrows, and then passed between the air bases of Sardinia and French North Africa, she was subjected again and again to attacks of every description. But she won through to Gibraltar.

The ship's company, looking back on all they endured, were amazed that in spite of all, they had won through. They must have realized that but for God's help they could not have done so. And so say we all. It was indeed a miracle. "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us ... then the waters had overwhelmed us." That, indeed, seems to sum up this and many other incidents in the Siege of Malta.

One other instance of God's protecting hand may be recorded. It is of a different nature.

In the centre of the Island of Malta is a village named Mosta. It is famous for its church, or rather for the dome of its church, which is the third largest dome in the world. Since it had been built by the people of Mosta, they naturally, and quite rightly,

were extremely proud of it. It meant much to Mosta. In the spring of 1942 I was one afternoon watching the progress of an air raid, and while so doing I saw a bomb actually strike the dome of Mosta church. Knowing how deeply attached the people of Mosta were to their church, I was much distressed, and went round to Mosta to see for myself what had happened. I expected to see a scene of great desolation, but to my great relief, on arriving, I saw that the church was apparently intact. I went in, and then I saw lying on the marble floor of the church an enormous bomb (I was told later that it weighed 4,000 lbs.). I looked up and saw that a neat hole had been bored in the dome. The bomb, after boring this hole through the thick masonry of the dome, had fallen perhaps 200 feet on to the hard marble floor of the church, and had not gone off! It had done no more than dent the floor. If it had gone off, there is no doubt that all the walls of the church would have been blown outwards, and the dome would have collapsed onto the ruins. It is also extremely probable that the many people sheltering in the crypt underneath would have been killed. The bomb was rendered harmless as soon as possible, and the people of Mosta breathed freely once again. To say that they were relieved is a gross understatement. But their thankfulness was tinged with gratitude to Almighty God, whose intervention they saw in the incident. As they said, "It is a miracle." We cannot but agree with them.

But the greatest evidences of God's help and His care were to be seen in the innumerable small mercies which we were constantly experiencing. Many of these are known only to oneself and God; many others would not take the fancy of outsiders, being insignificant and unshowy. But they were very real to the one who experienced them. As one now looks back on these signal proofs of His mercy and His gracious help, one can wholeheartedly say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (Psalm 103:2).

# Chapter 13

## The Nation and God

THERE is no doubt that during this Second World War God has been speaking to the nations, our own included, just as He did in the previous World War. It is possible that we did not pay attention to what He said to us then, and that may be the reason why He has had to speak again. God's voice surely has been plain. We do well to take heed.

Many centuries ago Moses reviewed the situation with the people of Israel. They had just concluded a phase in their warfare and were entering another phase. As they looked back they saw all the trials and humiliations they had endured — and they saw, as well, God's great deliverances and His wonderful provision for their needs. Moses recalled all this to the people, and he explained the reasons why God had led them along the path they had trod. Listen, as he tells the people of God's doings and shows them something of God's mind.

"Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or not. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna ... that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only ... Thou shalt also consider ... that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord Thy God chasteneth thee."

These are words which might have been written for us (as in a sense they were) and should be deeply pondered. God has certainly humbled us, and chastened us. Never in the history of our Empire have we been humbled as we were by the terrible happenings in the Far East, when the victorious Japanese forces wrested

from us territory after territory, and captured places which many had fondly thought to be impregnable. But with the humbling went deliverance. Although we were brought very low, we were not utterly cast down, and now we are being lifted up. Just as the disasters which beset us were far greater than we might have reasonably expected, humanly speaking, so also have the deliverances and victories been more startling, rapid, and complete than we might have anticipated. The tide of triumph which is carrying the Allied Armies across Europe at the time of writing (August, 1944) is surely more complete than even the most sanguine could have expected on the human plane. God has been speaking — His voice has been heard by us both in judgment and in mercy. God grant that we may heed it. This is just what Moses besought the people of Israel to do. After reviewing the past he faced the future and urged them to avoid the deadly perils of forgetfulness and heedlessness. Listen again:

Beware lest thou forget the Lord thy God. ... Lest when thou hast eaten and art full ... then thine heart be lifted up and thou forget the Lord thy God ... who led thee through the great and terrible wilderness... that He might humble thee and prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end — and thou say in thine heart, 'My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.' But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God. For it is He who giveth thee power to get wealth."

We will do well to ponder the whole 8th Chapter of Deuteronomy from which these extracts have been taken.

It is right that we should give honour where honour is due. Indeed, we are exhorted to do so. We cannot be too grateful to those gallant men of the fighting services and the Merchant Navy who have faced the enemy for us, and many of whom have given their lives for us. But as we face the situation we cannot avoid the conclusion that their efforts, splendid though they were, could not in themselves have brought us through disaster to victory. That was God's doing. We must recognize this, and show our gratitude to Him to Whom, more than to any other, we owe the blessings of success.

But as we face up to this challenging fact, we cannot but realize how wonderfully gracious God has been in doing these great things for us. We cannot pretend that nationally we have deserved such treatment. It is true that our cause is just and righteous. It is superlatively so. But are we righteous? It must be confessed that we are not, and yet God has condescended to help us, even though there is much in our national life which must be displeasing to Him. In spite of the way God has been speaking to us, both in judgment and in mercy, we as a nation have not turned to Him. We have not discarded or turned from many things which we know are abhorrent to Him (if we think at all). He is still largely crowded out of our life, and is ignored and disregarded by us — all this in spite of what He has done for us. May God open the eyes of our nation to see, and open their ears to hear, and may we humbly acknowledge our sin and turn to Him. It is not enough to have a righteous cause. We need righteous people as well.

After the war has been won, we have the tremendous problems of the peace to face — the reconstruction and re-energizing of our nation and Empire. How can we solve these problems and overcome these difficulties if we leave God out of our reckoning, and ignore Him and His laws? We talk much of reconstruction, and take much thought for the fair super-structure we desire to build. But do we give enough thought to the foundation on which this super-structure will rest, and without which it cannot last? Surely we need to make sure of the foundation, and to urge upon our nation the necessity of choosing the right one. There is only one Foundation on which our nation can safely build, and that is Christ, the Rock of Ages. God grant that our nation may build on Him.

But this cannot be done lightly. It will need wholehearted earnestness. "Ye shall seek me and find me, when ye search for me with all your heart," God tells us. We will need to face the implications involved. We naturally long to do away with many of the tragedies and sorrows which mar human life, and which may be the results of sin. Are we prepared to face and root out the sin which causes them? Are we prepared to accept God's standards and His values?

Are we prepared to obey Him, even when, and especially when, His clear commands run counter with our own cherished ideas? These questions may be easy to ask — but to answer them rightly will involve an earnestness and a determination of which we see but too few signs. But it is only in such ways and by such methods that we can nationally lay the foundation on which we can build a stable and fair structure in the future life of our people.

We have so far been considering this question from the national standpoint. But that is not the most important or most practical line of approach. A nation is made up of individuals, and it will be what its individual members are. All that is written above can be and should be applied to individuals. As we individuals face the problems of our own lives, are we thinking of how to build the superstructure before we consider the foundation? Surely we will first make sure of the foundation. It must be the beginning of everything. In these days, more than ever, when uncertainty and change seem to be the order of the day, we need to get on to firm ground which cannot be shaken, and which will stand all the tests to which it may be subjected. Can we find such a foundation? Thank God, we can in Christ. Those who have built on Him have found that this is so.

"When the flood arose the stream beat vehemently upon that house and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock" (Luke 6:48). Thank God for such a foundation. If we are to help our country on to it, we must first build upon it ourselves. Then, and then only, will we be able to help others. To use another simile, we cannot hope to pull a person out of a bog, if we are in it ourselves. It is only as we allow God to "bring us up out of the horrible pit and the miry clay and set our feet upon a rock and establish our goings" that we will be able to lend effective help to others. Let us, therefore, first make sure that our feet are resting on the Rock, and then let us tell others of this sure and firm foundation which, by God's mercy, we have found. In this way we will not only find safety ourselves, but we will be able to help others as well, and so make our contribution to bringing our nation back to God.

# Chapter 14

## Christ the Friend

SOME years ago I was asked to address an Armistice Day gathering on the subject, "Has Christianity Failed?" It is a question on many people's lips today, and many are trying to supply an answer. These answers naturally vary since many different meanings are given to the word "Christianity." But in one sense it does not matter very much whether or not Christianity has failed, especially as a number of conflicting views may be held about the subject. But what does matter is that Christ has not failed, and no one who has any personal experience of Him can doubt that statement. That is a sure and certain fact.

In the foregoing chapters I have tried to indicate how true I have found this to be in my Army life. I look back on many failures of my own when He must have been grieved and disappointed by me, but in spite of it all, He has never once failed me. We live in a materialistic age, when mechanization is the order of the day, and the machine is apt to be more thought of than the man. But in the things of the Spirit it is not a thing we turn to, not a system, not a creed, not a religion, but a Person — and that Person is the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us. What a difference that makes!

I have come increasingly to value the personal relations one may enjoy with Him, and to appreciate the sympathy we get from Him. In our human life there are things which we cannot discuss with any living soul. But not so with Him. In our Service life one is entrusted with official secrets which may not be mentioned or hinted at to another. But there is no secret one cannot discuss with Him. This privilege has meant much to me, especially when I was in very responsible positions which tended to make me feel lonely. But those who know Christ need never feel lonely, since no secret need

be withheld from Him. It has also been a comfort to me to realize that He knows all about the matter which is troubling me — so that I do not need to enter into long explanations to make Him understand. Thank God that it is a Person with whom we deal, and thank God even more for that Person.

Another point which I have tried to emphasize is that it is a really practical thing to enter into such a relationship with God through Christ. Some think that the things of the Spirit are fanciful, and far removed from the hard, practical problems of life. That, as I have tried to show, has not been my experience — and I desire to emphasize this once again. Our rising generation is a severely practical one. It is not prepared to take things for granted. This is as it should be. I can humbly but confidently assert that I have found that Jesus Christ can and does meet my needs in everyday life. I have found that He can and does help in the humdrum small details of life as well as in all its bigger issues. I have found that His help is real and practical, and for that I can confidently commend Him to all who are willing to let Him come into their lives.

Just think for a moment what it is He does. In the first place He deals with the question of sin, that deadly reality and incurable disease which separates us from God. In order to be able to deal with it, He willingly gave His life as the Atonement for our sin, and thereby once for all proved His amazing love to us. He then delivers us from its power, if we let Him control our lives. We see on all sides how sin wrecks lives and brings untold misery. Christ keeps us from its power. Then, since He has a double interest in us, and since we are His not only by creation but by purchase as well, He is concerned with all that affects us. He will keep us from dishonouring Him — He will give us the help we need in our daily lives, that they may bring glory to Him. We can count on His sympathetic interest whenever we bring any difficulty or trouble to Him. We can count on His friendship and companionship at all times, especially when others desert us or let us down. And He will keep hold on us, and keep us from stumbling, until He presents us faultless before His Father's presence, when we will be with Him

forever in a very literal sense, and be privileged to serve Him without the limitations which at present encompass us. That is the One Who invites us to let Him come into our lives in order that He may load us with all these benefits; and that is the One Who, in His infinite grace and patience toward me, has made Himself real to me, and Whom I desire to commend to all.

## Appendix to Chapter 5

### *Note on Pacifism*

A COMMON mistake today is to regard peace as the chief characteristic of Christianity, but it should be noted how the primacy of righteousness over peace is maintained throughout Scripture. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable" (James 3:17). Melchisedec, King of Salem, was "first" King of Righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is King of Peace (Hebrews 7:2). "Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace" (II Timothy 2:22). "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). "If it be possible, as much as it depends on you, live peaceably with all men," wrote St. Paul (Romans 12:18), but he did not always find it possible, for he says, "when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed" (Galatians 2:11). Also, Paul seems to have parted ways with Barnabas as "the son of encouragment" is not mentioned again after Acts 15.

We must live righteously; for that very reason we may not be able to live peaceably with all men. And in these days, when so many are working for peace and stability, it is well to recall the words in Isaiah 32:17: "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever." It is always wise to do what is right, rather than what is merely expedient.

The question of peace was dealt with by the Archbishop of Canterbury on the 8th of October, 1935, as follows:

"At the outset we must recognize, though it may seem a hard saying, that peace in itself is not an ideal. It is a state which results from the achievement of ideals. Of these foremost are the ideals of a rule of reason, justice and law within and among the nations. These are ideals to be preserved for their own sake. In so far as they are realized, peace will follow. They are primary. Peace is secondary and derivative. There is, therefore, no intrinsic worth in

mere peace if it means acquiescence in the violation of justice and the rule of law. Indeed, the pursuit of mere peace may defeat its own object, for assured peace in the State and between States can only be secured by the vindication and the establishment of justice and the rule of law ... Of course, if all persons acknowledged the principle of love and were amenable to its appeal, the difficulty would not arise. It arises precisely because in the world as it is there are persons who reject that principle, scorn that appeal, and obey only the motive of self-will. If no attempt were made by the State to restrain — if need be by force — those who defy the rule of law, anarchy would follow, and the very basis on which the life of the community rests would be broken. I cannot believe that Christianity compels me to this conclusion."

It should be noted that the words "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace" are the words of our Lord Himself, as also the injunction "he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one" (Luke 11:21 and 22:36). In this connection it will not be out of place to quote from Practical Christianity<sup>1</sup> of April, 1932:

"A sister in a Jerusalem mission hospital tells of the wounded being brought in after local riots between Moslems and Jews, a ghastly array, but adds: 'This was, of course, before our troops arrived in Palestine.' In a letter to The Times from Sir Flinders Petrie is this paragraph: 'The impending raid on the prosperity of the country was only averted by the prompt action of our Air Force; a day's delay would have brought massacre.' A lady missionary, travelling by river to Hong Kong, tells of having to lie for safety in the bottom of the boat because of frequent attacks by rioters from the shore, but on rounding one reach of the river they came in sight of a British gunboat, from whence onward safety and peace were happily assured to them. And, as regards the pacification of other nations, The Times correspondent might be quoted:

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(1\*). Practical Christianity — the bi-monthly Organ of the Officer's Christian Union.

'All is now quiet in Cyprus; a company of the King's Regiment was flown from Cairo, and arrived just in time to pacify a mob.' "

Pacifism in the present state of the world may be little less than a sacrifice of Christian principle to humanitarian sentiment. The Christian attitude must be "Righteousness at any cost," not "Peace at any price," for the best way to preserve peace is to be strong in righteousness.

When Princess Elizabeth was married on November 20, 1947, Lt. General Sir William Dobbie sent her a copy of this book, A Very Present Help. She was happy for the gift and wrote the general a note of thanks:



BUCKINGHAM PALACE.

15th January, 1948.

Dear Sir William,

I was so delighted to receive the copy of your interesting book, "A Very Present Help", and I hope you will accept my grateful thanks for your kind thought in sending me such a lovely wedding present.

Yours sincerely  
Elizabeth

Lt. General Sir William Dobbie, G.C.M.G.  
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